United Nations A/63/PV.18

General Assembly
Sixth-third session

Official Records

18th plenary meeting
Thursday, 2 October 2008, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann ..... (Nicaragua)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Yáñez-Barnuevo (Spain), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

High-level plenary meeting devoted to the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action

Agenda item 52 (*continued*)

Groups of countries in special situations

(b) Specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries: outcome of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/165)

Draft resolution (A/63/L.3*)

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Thongloung Sisoulith, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Mr. Sisoulith (Lao People's Democratic Republic): On behalf of the Lao delegation, I congratulate the President of the Assembly on his election to preside over this important forum.

I also commend Ambassador Yukio Takasu of Japan for the efficient manner in which he facilitated the negotiations on the outcome document of this meeting.

We thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his comprehensive report on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. We feel pleased with the progress made thus far. The special problems and needs of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) have been widely recognized, and greater attention and resources have been given by regional and global multilateral and development institutions to the establishment of efficient transit systems.

Yet more remains to be done for the Almaty Programme of Action to be made a reality. In that regard, further actions are required to accelerate the process of establishing viable and predictable transit systems through the promotion of regional and subregional cooperative arrangements, closer cooperation between LLDCs and their neighbours, transit policy reforms and trade facilitation measures. It is also important to provide greater market access for goods originating from LLDCs.

Despite some progress, the economic growth and social well-being of LLDCs remain very vulnerable to external shocks and the multiple challenges facing the international community: financial instability, global economic slow-down, hikes in food and fuel prices and the impact of climate change. The LLDCs continue to be marginalized from the international trading system due to their high transaction costs, which prevent them from maximizing the use of trade as an instrument for achieving their development goals.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

08-53293 (E)

The draft declaration will re-energize all stakeholders to do more towards the fulfilment of their respective commitments, as called for in the Almaty Programme of Action.

Since its adoption, the Programme of Action has been translated into the development strategies of the Lao Government. The National Transport Committee, under the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, was established as a monitoring and reporting mechanism. Strategically located in the heart of the emerging Greater Mekong Subregion, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has upheld its firm commitment to actively participate in the subregional and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) economic cooperation frameworks.

To reap benefits from regional and subregional cooperation programmes while promoting trade, investment and tourism, the Government is pursuing a policy of gradual transformation from a landlocked to a land-linked nation, with priorities given to the development of the road transport network and regional and international linkages, including railway links and road maintenance and rehabilitation.

At the third summit of the leaders of the Greater Mekong Subregion, held in Vientiane, Lao People's Democratic Republic, in March 2008, the leaders of our six countries adopted a Joint Summit Declaration and the Vientiane Plan of Action for Greater Mekong Subregion development from 2008 to 2012 under the theme "Enhancing competitiveness through greater connectivity".

Our leaders reaffirmed their commitment to fostering closer subregional linkages. They also pledged to accelerate the construction and improvement of the remaining sections of subregional corridors and to expand the corridor network through multimodal linkages, including the Singapore-Kunming rail link.

To conclude, the Lao People's Democratic Republic reaffirms its unwavering commitment to continue to cooperate with other fellow LLDCs and its transit neighbours in the follow-up to the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.

We sincerely thank all donors for the generous aid they have provided to us over the past years. Yet, with its limited capacity as a landlocked least developed country, the Lao People's Democratic Republic hopes to receive increased support and assistance from the donor community, including the United Nations system.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Phandu T. C. Skalemani, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Botswana.

Mr. Skalemani (Botswana): Botswana welcomes the convening of this high-level plenary meeting to review progress in the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action for landlocked developing countries.

I thank the Secretary-General for a comprehensive and informative report on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. I also acknowledge the important work of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States in its instrumental role of coordination and advocacy of the development agenda of those groups of countries in special situations.

This meeting is very timely, especially as it takes place shortly after the high-level meetings on the development needs of Africa and the review of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, which is one of the crucial enablers for the attainment of the Goals, will open up opportunities for trade, economic growth and development.

The Almaty Programme of Action, adopted by the Assembly in August 2003, was the first comprehensive global strategy to address the special needs of, and challenges facing, landlocked developing countries. It recognized the constraints posed by lack of efficient transit transport routes and the associated high costs of land transportation, which have a negative impact on both the competitiveness of exports of landlocked countries and access to imported goods. Botswana is doing its part to implement the Almaty Programme of Action.

Botswana lies at the centre of the southern African plateau and is surrounded by four countries, with the nearest seaport being approximately 762 kilometres away. Our geographical location puts us

at a disadvantage with regard to access to cheaper means of transportation.

Though landlocked, we are a key transit route, with a responsibility to facilitate the smooth and efficient flow of the transit of goods. We take this responsibility seriously, as demonstrated by the programmes we have undertaken at the national level, bilaterally with our neighbours and within the framework of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

We take a large amount of transit traffic from south to north as well as from east to west. The Walvis Bay corridor, or trans-Kalahari corridor, runs through the western part of Botswana, linking Namibia, Botswana and South Africa, while the Durban-Lubumbashi corridor traverses a section of Botswana, connecting us with Zambia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Africa.

In this context, Botswana envisages the creation of one-stop border posts in order to address delays at the border. These posts will benefit the adjoining countries in terms of reduced transport costs and transit time.

Botswana highly appreciates the assistance, support and cooperation it receives from transit and coastal neighbouring States. It is most gratifying that Botswana's imports and exports go through our neighbours' roads, railways and ports unhindered. It therefore follows that any assistance extended to coastal and transit States in the development of efficient transport infrastructure is crucial to the trade routes of landlocked countries. In that regard, ongoing efforts to intensify economic cooperation and regional interaction deserve increased financial and technical support.

As a developing country, Botswana imports most of its production inputs, which, for an economy like ours, dominated by mining activity, amounts to a large volume of equipment annually. It is therefore vital that we secure efficient transport routes and services to facilitate the movement of goods. Botswana therefore attaches great importance to bilateral and regional arrangements to simplify, harmonize and standardize rules on transport and transit so as to minimize trade costs and make our products competitive in international markets.

It is the view of my delegation that there is an urgent need to strengthen and harmonize initiatives and programmes of regional economic communities, the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and development banks, in order to achieve proper synergy and coordination in their operations, so as to complement the Almaty Programme of Action.

Assistance for the rehabilitation of existing transport infrastructure is critical. That would ensure viability of transport corridors and sustained economic spin-offs for communities residing along those corridors.

In order to further facilitate the speedy and efficient flow of trade, Botswana is currently undertaking expansion of the Sir Seretse Khama International Airport in Gaborone. The airport will be able to accommodate bigger aircraft, which will enable the transportation of large volumes of goods.

Botswana's classification as a middle-income country presents some challenges, as we cannot access development assistance from donor agencies. The unique circumstances of landlocked countries in terms of infrastructure development should therefore be taken into account, as they present serious capacity constraints. As a result, achievement of the objectives of the Almaty Programme of Action will continue to be a challenge. However, we shall endeavour to live up to our commitments in partnership and collaboration with our neighbouring countries.

In conclusion, I once again reiterate our commitment to the Almaty Programme of Action, which, if fully implemented, will enhance trade opportunities for Botswana and indeed promote equitable development of the SADC region as a whole.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Simon Ejua, Minister of State for Works and Transport of the Republic of Uganda.

Mr. Ejua (Uganda): It is a great honour for me to be here today to participate in this review meeting of the Almaty Programme of Action. As a landlocked developing country (LLDC), Uganda welcomes the opportunity to take part.

The peculiar challenges faced by landlocked developing countries due to the lack of territorial and international access to the sea and international waterways limit their scope for effective participation

in international trade. They therefore require the cooperation and collaboration of their neighbouring transit countries to overcome the challenges they face.

The Almaty Programme of Action, which provides a global framework for cooperation between landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries, is accordingly an essential component in their development agenda. It is also an important effort to effectively deal with the specialized requirements and challenges facing landlocked developing countries and further their integration into regional economic communities and their partnerships.

We in Uganda believe that the review of the Almaty Programme of Action will provide solutions to the challenges currently facing landlocked countries.

The Almaty Programme of Action provides a worldwide framework for the creation of appropriate transit transport systems in landlocked, transit developing and small island developing countries, recognizing that valid solutions need an integrated approach so that the challenges and problems faced by those countries can be transformed into opportunities.

As everyone present knows, inadequate infrastructure is a major obstacle to establishing efficient transit transport systems in both landlocked and transit developing countries. Addressing those needs will involve considerable investment, the setting up of public-private partnerships, capacity-building and new policies and institutional reforms where necessary. That calls for closer collaboration between the landlocked and transit developing countries and their partners to provide additional financial resources and capacity-building assistance.

Road transport is the main mode of transport for the imports and exports of landlocked developing countries. Sizeable resource allocations are required for the expansion and maintenance of road transit infrastructure.

The key challenges facing international road transport are aged vehicles, overloading of vehicles, worsening road safety, the absence of social infrastructure along transit corridors, cumbersome clearance procedures and poor road maintenance. Subregional and regional infrastructure development plans should give high priority to transit corridors linking landlocked developing countries to the transport networks of transit developing countries and regional networks.

Railways play an important role in the transit transport corridor systems linking ocean ports with landlocked developing countries. Major concerns include the persistent problem of the limited availability of equipment, including locomotives and wagons, and poor maintenance standards. The actions required include the construction of new railway connections and the rehabilitation of existing railway facilities as a matter of priority, in conjunction with the new technological improvements and innovations being examined.

The efficiency of port operations depends on adequate infrastructure and good management. Many seaports are critical bottlenecks in transit systems because of a range of physical inadequacies and operational constraints, which include poor handling and storage facilities for transit cargo, cumbersome procedures for the clearing and release of cargo, congestion and a shortage of skilled manpower.

Landlocked and transit developing countries should seek cooperative arrangements to improve port facilities and services for transit goods, including the modernization of existing terminals, the establishment of new ones and the simplification of procedures where appropriate.

Inland waterways provide transit services to some landlocked developing countries. The efficiency of transit services along such waterways requires better infrastructure, appropriate legal frameworks to govern navigational operations on rivers and lakes and more effective environmental and safety measures. Further efforts should be made to rehabilitate and expand lake and river infrastructure facilities along corridors linking landlocked developing countries to ocean ports.

Pipelines provide a cost-effective means of transport for both oil and natural gas. The planning and construction of pipelines requires close cooperation between landlocked and transit developing countries. The substantive investments required for the construction of pipelines also necessitate capital investment from the private sector. Landlocked and transit developing countries should cooperate and coordinate to construct pipelines along the most effective and most suitable or shortest routes, taking into account the interests of the parties concerned.

I am confident that this meeting, having taken stock of the progress achieved so far and of the outstanding challenges, will come up with recommendations on tangible actions and deliverables to enhance the implementation of the Almaty Programme, for the beneficial integration of landlocked and transit countries in the global trading system.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Adviser in Charge of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): On behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries, as its chair, I begin by commending the President for the holding of this high-level meeting for landlocked developing countries.

The Secretary-General and his High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States deserve our praise for their substantive contributions to this event.

The challenges that landlocked countries face are enormous. The least developed landlocked countries are the worst off. In a highly competitive world, landlocked developing countries face severe constraints because of their narrow export base, lack of access to the sea, distance from major international markets, inadequate transport infrastructure and cumbersome transit procedures. They still face insurmountable challenges in integrating their economies into the world market.

Landlocked developing countries are also highly vulnerable to external shocks, which are painfully amplified by the number of new and emerging challenges. The current food crisis, high energy prices, climate change and global warming pose a serious threat to their efforts aimed at the eradication of poverty, hunger, malnutrition, disease and illiteracy and the achievement of other socio-economic goals.

Transit neighbours of LLDCs are mostly developing or emerging economies. They, too, encounter similar economic challenges and scarcities of resources and infrastructure. The special needs and challenges must be addressed comprehensively. Full implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action is critically important. We concur with the Secretary-General that

> "Measures to deal with the transit problems must address inadequate infrastructure, trade imbalance, inefficient transport organization, and weak managerial, procedural, regulatory and institutional systems." (*A/63/165, para. 77*)

Such a comprehensive approach will offer a win-win outcome for both LLDCs and transit neighbours.

We must intensify global efforts to establish viable and predictable transit systems for landlocked and transit countries. The construction, maintenance and improvement of their transport, storage and other transit-related facilities should be ensured.

Official development assistance remains the major source of investment in developing infrastructures in landlocked and transit countries. Development partners should provide adequate financial and technical assistance on a predictable basis to implement transit infrastructure projects in those countries.

Landlocked countries and their transit neighbours must cooperate closely and meaningfully to build efficient transit systems. South-South cooperation, including triangular and regional and subregional cooperation, has become increasingly important in that regard.

In conclusion, let me reiterate the solidarity of the least developed countries with the LLDCs, and Bangladesh's unswerving support for them. We are not an immediate transit country ourselves; rather, we offer transit to two landlocked countries through a third country.

The Government of Bangladesh has always been forthcoming in providing such facilities to landlocked countries of the region. We are in the process of building an uninterrupted road network throughout the country. Developing multimodal transit transport arrangements involving road, railway and waterways entails huge investment. We call upon our development partners to provide adequate support in that regard.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency The Honourable Dora Siliya, Minister of Communications and Transport of the Republic of Zambia.

Ms. Siliya (Zambia): My delegation congratulates the Secretary-General on convening this high-level meeting on the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action. As previous speakers have already said, the review provides us with yet another platform to address the immediate and long-term challenges faced by landlocked developing countries.

According to available statistics, sub-Saharan Africa enjoyed a positive and stable balance of trade during 2006 and 2007, with exports contributing an average of 40 per cent to gross domestic product (GDP), while imports contributed 36 per cent in 2006 and 38.8 per cent in 2007.

Similarly, in terms of information and communications technologies development, in 2006 the Internet penetration of the population in Africa stood at 4.7 per cent. In Asia and North America, the figures were 13.7 per cent and 38.7 per cent respectively. Specifically for the landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), the Internet penetration in 2006 stood at 2.9 per cent. Clearly, those statistics indicate that Africa's information and communications technologies development is the lowest in the world, representing only 3.4 per cent of the world Internet penetration.

In the case of Zambia, statistics on growth are very favourable, with GDP currently at $10.9 billion, reflecting a 5.5 per cent growth rate and a GDP per capita of $920. However, the available transport and communication infrastructure cannot sustain that growth in the long term. Studies have shown that a mere 10 per cent increase in mobile phone penetration can contribute as much as 2.6 per cent to GDP growth.

The Zambian Government realizes the important role that communication and transport infrastructure play in sustaining economic growth for long-term wealth- and job-creation.

Our immediate challenge is a failure to quickly and adequately respond to the unprecedented levels of economic activity. For example, on our north-south corridor there has been a tremendous increase in cargo transportation, causing a burden on the treasury for road maintenance. That burden is exacerbated by a run-down 1,200-kilometre rail network running alongside the main road network on that corridor.

An estimated $100 million is required to rehabilitate the rail line in the north-south corridor, with another $179 million needed for the Dar es Salaam corridor, which is the Tanzania Zambia Railways Authority (TAZARA) rail line linking Zambia to Tanzania and ultimately to the ports on the east coast of Africa.

As a landlocked country, we are also immediately challenged by the lack of adequate and efficient border facilities, which adversely affects trade facilitation. A good example is again on our north-south corridor, where at any given time over 200 trucks are waiting to be cleared to carry cargo from countries south of Zambia to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On their return trips the trucks are heavily laden with tons of copper.

It is the view of my delegation that at this midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action we should redefine transit countries to include some landlocked countries, such as Zambia, which are carrying heavy amounts of transit cargo to other countries.

Our long-term challenges are numerous, but not insurmountable. We believe that at this review of the Almaty Programme of Action clear guidelines and support must be formulated to assist landlocked and transit developing countries to develop integrated multimodal transport systems.

For example, in Zambia we are currently seeking financing to undertake feasibility studies for TAZARA rail links to the port of Mpulungu on Lake Tanganyika, and we are doing the same to construct a 200-kilometre rail link to Lions Den in Zimbabwe so that we are linked to the shortest possible route to the sea, which is to Beira in Mozambique. Currently, our most popular access to the sea is a distance of just over 3,000 kilometres, to the port of Durban in the Republic of South Africa.

In our effort to continue to facilitate trade and enhance communication, we have so far laid 1,750 kilometres of optic fibre at a cost of $48 million. Our aim is to lay another 10,000 kilometres of optic fibre nationwide by 2015.

As a landlocked country surrounded by eight neighbours, we realize that we have to work with the region and the private sector to enhance connectivity and maximize returns on investment in communication and transport infrastructure. A recent study estimates that the infrastructure required in East and Southern

Africa will cost at least $40 billion annually. This investment will go towards communication, transport and energy development.

In spite of our efforts to provide the necessary infrastructure to facilitate trade, non-oil-producing landlocked developing countries, such as Zambia, will continue to be challenged by high transport costs, in some cases as much as an extra 50 per cent, due to high world oil prices.

It is critically important that we address the software issues, including institutional and administrative constraints, that continue to challenge our progress. Clear policy implementation must also be supported by an enabling legal and regulatory environment.

The very issues that we are discussing today — communication and transport — have brought the world's communities much closer than ever before, as is well captured in the book "The World Is Flat" by Thomas L. Friedman. This is why it is imperative that our cooperating partners continue to provide all necessary assistance.

For example, in our 2030 vision for Zambia, in which we pledge to transform Zambia from a least developed country to a middle-income country, we see our landlocked geographical position as yet another possibility for communication and transport connectivity in the region and beyond. Developed infrastructure leads to efficiency, thereby creating gains for everyone, including our cooperating partners.

Let me conclude by stating Zambia's hope that at the next review of the Almaty Programme of Action more positive reports on all aspects of implementation will be shared among members of the Programme. That will be possible not only through national efforts, such as good planning aligned to the budget process, but also through the fulfilment of commitments by our cooperating partners.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Upendra Yadav, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal.

Mr. Yadav (Nepal): The Almaty Programme of Action, agreed upon five years ago, remains a sound framework for partnership among the landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), transit developing countries and the developed partners to overcome the special problems of the LLDCs, which face difficulty due to lack of access to the sea and to global markets. As we meet here for the midterm review of its implementation, we need to do more to ensure effective implementation of all the activities under the Programme of Action.

The report of the Secretary-General shows that both landlocked and transit developing countries have made some progress in implementing specific actions agreed in the Almaty Programme of Action. They have made policy reforms and given priority to transit transport issues. They have engaged in a much stronger development partnership with respect to transport infrastructure development and trade facilitation, as well as aid, debt relief and market access. This has enabled the LLDCs as a group to register a high annual growth rate.

But the segregated data show that different countries are in different stages of achieving implementation. And those landlocked countries emerging from conflict need special attention and support.

My delegation is of the view that we should make a realistic assessment of the progress made, lessons learned and problems encountered in the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and agree on measures to accelerate its implementation. While doing that, we should focus our attention on bridging the gaps in the implementation of the agreed commitments. We should also take into account new challenges posed by climate change, global food and energy crises, and other external shocks of various kinds.

The LLDCs have been unfairly marginalized in the global market due to their geographical disadvantages. They suffer from inadequate infrastructure development, congested transit transport systems, institutional bottlenecks and trade capacity constraints. As a result, their competitive efficiency remains weak and vulnerable. Therefore, with reaffirmation of their right of access to and from the sea and freedom of transit by all means of transport, special programmes need to be developed to upgrade the necessary facilities to ensure those rights.

Increased official development assistance is critical for those countries to finance the development of their infrastructure. We urge the donor community to increase aid to support trade-related public investment

in accordance with the national development needs and priorities of the LLDCs.

International trade and trade facilitation aspects are equally significant to the LLDCs to improve and promote trade as an engine for growth. Poor road and transport conditions, dependence on primary-commodity exports, high transit transport costs and numerous procedural constraints and delays continue to seriously undermine the trade efficiency of the landlocked countries.

We welcome the Aid for Trade initiative of the World Trade Organization and stress the need for more resources, effectively used, to be allocated to that practical initiative in developing trade logistics and trade diversification strategies, as well as in addressing trade adjustment costs.

In spite of global efforts, data suggest that a total of 31 landlocked countries have a mere 0.61 per cent share in world exports, and a 0.57 per cent share in world imports. Given this insignificant participation in international trade, the LLDCs are entitled to adequate special measures and preferential treatment under the multilateral trading system to assure them of fairness and predictability while they explore competitive trading opportunities. The international community should therefore support the LLDCs financially and technologically, in a more predictable and sustainable manner.

Nepal is fully committed to taking all necessary measures at the national level to implement the Almaty Programme of Action. Nepal has been undergoing a process of great political and economic transformation. Our new social and economic programmes are designed to accelerate our socio-economic progress. We also need to undertake a post-conflict reconstruction programme.

We have focused on increasing agricultural productivity, building rural infrastructure, increasing road connectivity and creating a high-growth industrial environment. The Government for its part is implementing various reforms in industrial and trade policies and transport and customs procedures.

We need strong partnerships and adequate resources. At this critical juncture, we call for continued and enhanced support from all our development partners to enable us to fully implement the Almaty Programme of Action within the stipulated time frame.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nurlan Danenov, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Danenov (Kazakhstan) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a great honour for me to be here today and to take part in this meeting, which is of great importance to my country.

(*spoke in Russian*)

Let me first express my gratitude to the Office of the High Representative for organizing this meeting and in general for the work of promoting the interests of the landlocked developing countries (LLDCs).

We commend the midterm review preparatory process, during which a number of thematic meetings took place, covering topics which included the transit transport infrastructure in Burkina Faso and trade assistance in Mongolia. There were also three regional United Nations Economic Commission meetings and many other preparatory meetings.

Those meetings, as well as the findings and recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General, provided a good basis for the comprehensive assessment of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and the definition of follow-up measures. In that regard, I have to point out the importance of the High-level Investment Forum held yesterday.

It is very important that the outcome document we are to adopt is the result of a common understanding and consensus, which assures us that the meeting will contribute to the successful implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and to the protection and promotion of the interests of landlocked developing countries.

It is very encouraging that over the last five years landlocked developing countries have made considerable progress in carrying out tasks in accordance with the Almaty Programme of Action.

What is especially important is that the world community has acknowledged the special needs of the inland countries, which must be taken into account. Nevertheless, we must recognize that, despite the notable positive changes, many States in that group

continue to be negatively affected by the factors that impede the development of their economies, and are not adequately involved in the international trade system. The main reasons are well known and are clearly and convincingly set out in the Secretary-General's report.

Kazakhstan makes a strong appeal to the international community to give due attention to the economic vulnerability of landlocked countries, ensure their equal access to world markets and give them comprehensive support to help them overcome the obstacles and problems related to their geographical location.

In that regard, we consider it vital to expedite practical implementation of the recommendations in the Almaty Programme of Action.

Kazakhstan has a clear understanding of the importance of national efforts. The Government is therefore implementing result-oriented work at the national level to develop trade capacity and the transport sector. This work includes modernizing existing facilities, improving the commercial orientation of transportation services and eliminating non-physical barriers to the development of transit shipments.

The major goals and parameters in this field are reflected in the Transport Strategy of Kazakhstan for the period to 2015. It provides for the implementation of about 80 investment projects to construct and upgrade airports, highways and railroads, as well as for the development of seaport infrastructure that is important at the regional and interregional levels. Those projects will cost about $30 billion.

One of the priorities is a large-scale project to establish a Western Europe-Western China highway transit corridor. The length of the Kazakh part of the road, which can be considered one of the Eurasian transport sections, exceeds 2,700 kilometres. The project was supported by Russia, and there are now talks under way with China.

Our country is ready to contribute its own funds alongside those of investors. An important role in this context has been given to a joint venture, the Kazakhstan centre for public-private partnership. Kazakhstan has in general — according to participants in the seventh International Forum "TransEurasia-2008", on the subject of Eurasian transit-development prospects, held recently in Astana — met the basic preconditions for attracting foreign investments in the transport infrastructure.

In this context, I would like to emphasize the importance of attaining effective cooperation of Member States with the regional Commissions. In general, we are satisfied with the participation and contribution of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in implementing big projects which considerably improve the transport infrastructure of the Asian region.

This refers, first, to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network and the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network, which provide for new possibilities to develop agriculture and industry in landlocked developing countries and transit countries in our region.

The ESCAP and ECE joint project for strengthening institutional capacities for development of the interregional land and land-sea transport connections is also very important.

I especially note the significance of implementing transport projects within the frameworks of the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) and the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA). Since 1998 Kazakhstan, as a chairing country on the issue of transport and border-crossing, has been carrying out large-scale activities within the framework of the Project Working Group. Its work ensures the involvement of SPECA countries in harmonizing national laws, resolving the non-physical barriers to trade, and coordinating highways and rail networks within the SPECA region.

At the same time, the United Nations should pay more attention to the countries of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, particularly with regard to the development of transit and transport capacity, due to their increasing role in meeting the challenges of energy and food security in the region.

In this regard, we fully support the initiative of the United Nations Secretariat to establish the joint subregional ESCAP/ECE office for Central Asian countries, and we express our hope that Member States will support Kazakhstan's proposal to host this office in Almaty, which we are convinced would enhance the

coordination of efforts to achieve the development goals in Eurasia.

Given that development of the transport infrastructure is one of the major priorities for inland countries, it must be said that the majority of developing States in this group require financial and technical assistance. In this context, we consider it important that the draft outcome document contain an appeal to donor countries and international organizations and institutions to provide the necessary coordinated technical and financial assistance, in the form of grants and preferential credits, to implement regional and interregional projects in accordance with the Almaty Programme of Action. We express our hope that this call will be duly answered by all those who support the Programme of Action.

In conclusion, I stress that Kazakhstan will continue to actively support the activities of the United Nations and its regional Commissions in promoting the interests of landlocked developing countries, and will take every measure necessary to ensure their effective implementation.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Paul Smit, Deputy Minister of Works and Transport of the Republic of Namibia.

Mr. Smit (Namibia): It is indeed an honour for me to speak at this high-level plenary meeting devoted to the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action.

This meeting affords us an opportunity to review the progress we have made since our groundbreaking meeting in Almaty, Kazakhstan, five years ago. It also enables us to share experiences, lessons learned, constraints encountered in the process of implementation and possible ways of addressing them, and to reaffirm our commitment to addressing the special needs of landlocked and transit developing countries.

The Namibian delegation associates itself with the statement to be delivered by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The Almaty Declaration places the primary responsibility for establishing effective transit systems squarely on the shoulders of landlocked and transit developing countries. In this regard, my country, Namibia, a transit developing country, in cooperation with landlocked neighbours, has continued to register significant progress in attaining the ideals of the Programme of Action since our meeting in Almaty. Indeed, our transit transport programme started well before the Programme's adoption, through the establishment of transit transport corridor institutions.

The Walvis Bay Corridor Group was established in 2000 to administer and manage the Walvis Bay corridors, consisting of the Trans-Caprivi corridor, which provides road connectivity to Zambia through to Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and through Botswana up to Zimbabwe; the Trans-Kunene corridor, which connects Namibia with southern Angola by both rail and road; and the envisaged Windhoek-Luanda corridor to link the two cities through north-eastern Namibia and south-eastern Angola by road.

The Trans-Kalahari Corridor Secretariat was established in 2005 to complement the Walvis Bay Corridor Group. It is responsible for the management of the Trans-Kalahari corridor, which links Namibia to southern Botswana and to South Africa through the Kalahari highway and further on with Mozambique via the Maputo corridor. Southern corridor networks will ultimately link landlocked countries east to west for Southern Africa.

Further developments in our efforts to implement the Almaty Programme of Action include the following.

A Memorandum of Understanding on the Management and Development of the Trans-Kalahari Corridor was signed in November 2003 by Namibia, Botswana and South Africa.

Namibia has also signed with Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe a memorandum of understanding on the management and development of dry port facilities, for which negotiations on lease agreements are nearing finalization.

Streamlined customs procedures, harmonized axle load limits and border operating times have been introduced on the Trans-Kalahari corridor to accelerate transit transport.

Considerable investment has been made at the port of Walvis Bay by way of, inter alia, upgrading, acquiring modern synchrolift equipment, deepening the port, developing dry dock facilities and making operational upgrades. The port will undergo a further

upgrade costing 1.3 billion Namibian dollars — or US$ 160 million during the period 2009-2012.

The introduction of the one-stop border post concept on our corridors is being investigated, in line with provisions of the Southern African Development Community Protocol on Transport, Communications and Meteorology, and will soon be implemented.

Another feasibility study on the Trans-Caprivi corridor rail line has been launched. It is aimed at facilitating rail connectivity with Zambia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mechanisms are being put in place to erect at the Kasangula confluence point over the Zambezi River a bridge that will eventually link Namibia, Botswana and Zambia.

Discussions are ongoing with the Republic of Botswana on the possibility of linking our rail heads on the Trans-Kalahari corridor, based on the funding pledged by the World Bank.

Weighbridges have been installed on our corridor routes to protect our road infrastructure, and Namibia is in the process of acquiring container scanners in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness at our border posts.

Permit me to register the appreciation of my Government for the cooperation and support that we have been receiving from our neighbouring sister countries in our effort to implement the letter and spirit of the Almaty Programme of Action.

Paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Almaty Declaration, as elaborated in Priority 4 of the Almaty Programme of Action, emphasize the important role that the international community should play in providing substantial official development assistance and other resources to landlocked and transit developing countries.

In spite of the progress made, the following challenges remain to be overcome: scientific and technical human resource development; access to affordable financial resources to the tune of about $200 million to upgrade our rail facilities; and access to affordable financial resources to the tune of about $1 billion to extend Namibia's rail facilities to our borders. Also at stake is a combined distance of about a thousand kilometres within our neighbouring countries of Angola, Botswana and Zambia to have full links.

However, I should like at this juncture to express the gratitude of my Government for the assistance that we continue to receive from a few of our cooperating partners towards the attainment of the ideals of the Almaty Programme of Action. Since 2005 Namibia has benefited from the capacity-building programme facilitated by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

Finally, Namibia's commitment and political will in putting in place functional transit transport arrangements deserves complementary financial and technical support from the larger international community. If we are to proceed with the development of an alternative trade route for Southern Africa through the port of Walvis Bay, the development of infrastructure is a necessity, for which we appeal for international support. Addressing the special needs of landlocked and transit developing countries cannot and should not be left to those countries alone, because a boost in international trade will benefit all of us.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on Her Excellency Ms. María Teresa Infante, National Director of Borders and Limits of the State of the Republic of Chile.

Ms. Infante (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Government of Chile is participating enthusiastically in the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action. We reaffirm our commitment to its objectives, convinced of the importance of the priorities defined in the Almaty Declaration and Programme of Action.

The Programme provided an important set of concepts and has led our countries to conduct evaluations and identify strategies that give substantive direction to national policies on landlocked developing countries. In pursuing its objectives, we reaffirm the validity of the central purpose of the Programme of Action: establishing partnerships around the Millennium Development Goals from the perspective of landlocked and transit developing countries.

The components of the Goals not only include subjects linked to development in a broad sense and to the reduction of poverty as a general reference point, but are also intended to create responses at the level of international relations and across boundaries. This is to benefit the inhabitants of landlocked and transit developing countries, expand the horizons of those countries and contribute to overcoming existing material and technical limitations.

There are many areas in which the relationships involved are tested and require greater responsibility on the part of States. The Almaty Programme of Action set ambitious objectives. The great majority, and perhaps the most significant, are related to three aspects.

First, the landlocked and transit countries must commit themselves to act cooperatively and with a medium- and long-term perspective. Issues such as seeking and implementing more effective agreements on transport, infrastructure, debt and market access should not be viewed solely in the context of economic relations, but should also include other types of relationships involving not just assistance, but also cooperation, trade and development.

The second aspect is the need to strengthen the capacities to mobilize financial and human resources and to make sustainable policies benefiting landlocked developing countries, always taking into account their relationships with transit developing countries and the ability to promote effective coordination between them.

Thirdly, the following policies would help to bring about a sustainable reduction of vulnerabilities: giving appropriate priority to internal mechanisms that contribute to governance, in order to promote the partnership between landlocked and transit developing countries; integrating the business sector and private sector and civil society initiatives; and mobilizing national resources within the framework of agreed national and international policies. Such an approach would complement the efforts being made in other forums at the regional and global levels.

Exercise of the right of access from and to the sea, and freedom of transit in accordance with international law, enshrined in a series of international treaties, as well as the legitimate interests of transit countries based on their sovereign rights, constitute an important reference point founded on international law. It is one that my country fully adheres to.

In that context, the concept of the special needs of landlocked developing countries — in particular the identification of those needs related to the issue of transit through other States, which also have legitimate rights and interests — cannot be separated from the general processes that I have described.

We particularly appreciate the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, as well as the work of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, which present a balanced and broad vision of the status of the issues that have brought us together today.

The priorities of the 2003 Programme of Action with respect to transit policy issues, infrastructure development and maintenance, international trade and trade facilitation, as well as international support measures, are all an integral part of Chile's foreign policy. Around these priorities, Chile's policies in the South American context have produced specific work programmes and actions with Bolivia and Paraguay.

With the adoption of the Almaty Programme of Action it was necessary to define courses of action in the South American context. At the bilateral level an agenda is being developed with Bolivia within a broad, all-inclusive dialogue whose essential components include joint efforts to provide more efficient transit transport systems and swift, functional border controls; to cooperate to prevent smuggling; to harmonize environmental and public health programmes, especially with respect to dangerous cargoes; and to implement useful non-discriminatory regulatory frameworks, as well as to have the will to improve them.

Bilaterally with Bolivia, we have plans and working groups focused on achieving full complementarity between public and private operators involved in transit relationships. We have adopted the same approach with Paraguay.

Furthermore, as a result of agreements originating from Chile's association with the South American Common Market (MERCOSUR) for more than a decade, there are projects today that benefit all its members by giving access to the Pacific. As one of those members, Paraguay now has alternatives.

The Government of Chile has announced the grant of access by Bolivia to the port of Iquique, under the free transit regime that Bolivia enjoys under existing treaties. That is in addition to the current access to Arica and Antofagasta, which already handle a great deal of Bolivian freight. Moreover, the agreement on the pipeline connecting Bolivia to Arica continues to be implemented.

In 2004 a duty-free warehouse for freight coming from and going to Paraguay was set up, in implementation of a specific agreement already in force, consistent with the active processes of physical integration in which the countries concerned are participating.

Similar developments can also be seen in the cooperation policy of the Chilean International Cooperation Agency, which covers, among other things, the education, culture, health and poverty-reduction sectors.

Physical integration — in which are highlighted advances and deficiencies in matters of connectivity, the use of infrastructure, transport systems, applicable norms and the use of border crossings — has been an important basis for understanding the real world of relations between South American countries.

With regard to rail transport, my Government has developed actions designed to revitalize this means of communication with Bolivia, from the point of view of both the infrastructure and border crossings. Chile has earnestly cooperated in the process that I have described.

The Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South America (IIRSA), which has been in place since 2000, is starting to bear fruit with respect to providing methodology for the prioritization of projects, their implementation and the consideration of their environmental sustainability.

Chile participates in a series of corridors, usable throughout the year, that are connected with the other countries of the Southern Cone. We want to enhance this process, with the support of international, regional and subregional financing agencies, within the framework of implementation of the Union of South American Nations so that there will be a convergence of the objectives and commitments of States at the bilateral and regional levels.

In strengthening this scenario, we also have to reflect the agreements implementing the Millennium Development Goals and the Almaty Programme of Action.

This convergence can be seen in the December 2007 agreement of the Presidents to give life to the central inter-oceanic corridor, involving Bolivia, Brazil and Chile, and joining Arica and Iquique in the process. The project results from the decision to combine physical integration with a process of equitable economic growth in the three countries, aiming to support trade flows and boldly facilitating the movement of people.

The projects set out should increase trade within the regions involved and have an impact on growth and employment, as well as improve knowledge of the peoples and quality of life, points that were highlighted by the President of the Republic of Chile when she signed the agreement.

While integration is a concept that begins with the construction of basic infrastructure, known as a kind of corridor, it becomes reality when it takes the form of specific initiatives, since there is no effective integration at the margin of neighbouring countries. In South America, both Bolivia and Paraguay are seen as fundamental players in this process, so that any integration with respect to the Almaty Programme of Action must actively include them.

These matters cannot be separated from the debate on major issues of international trade, of goods and services, in which it should be agreed that landlocked developing countries must fully enjoy the benefits to be derived from international agreements and market access. They must also overcome the disadvantages they experience as a result of their geographical location and lesser development.

We agree on enhancing the contribution that the multilateral trading system can make to the effectiveness of freedom of transit, exercised in a non-discriminatory fashion, subject to speedy, transparent mechanisms, bearing in mind the specific circumstances and appropriate legal frameworks for passage through third countries, especially with regard to environmental and health matters.

The task for transit developing countries is therefore considerable. We support the reforms and specific measures designed to simplify procedures and formalities so that they are not obstacles to relations with landlocked developing countries, but become effective instruments of cooperation.

It is the responsibility of international organizations to support that process. It is up to our Governments to provide the proper mandates to strengthen the capacities of transit and landlocked developing countries in advancing this partnership process and the provision of adequate infrastructure.

The year 2015 is on the horizon, and my country wishes to reach it having developed responses to comply with the objectives and guidelines of the Almaty Declaration.

We therefore support the midterm review outcome document and the commitments resulting from the policies it sets out, and we join in the general agreement on this matter.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ts'ele Chakela, Minister of Public Works and Transport of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

Mr. Chakela (Lesotho): It is a great honour and pleasure to have this opportunity to say a few words on the Almaty Programme of Action.

As we look back on the five years since the Programme of Action was adopted in Kazakhstan in 2003, I invite all those present to applaud ourselves for a visionary programme of action that has set the tone for the development of our geographically disadvantaged countries. I am very proud to have been part of the process that led to its adoption, including the last preparatory meeting, which was held here.

Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Programme of Action has seven objectives and five policy priority areas — transit policy and regulatory framework, infrastructure development, trade and transport facilitation, development assistance and implementation review — against which our progress can be measured.

It is indeed a daunting challenge, which can only be met through solidarity and cooperation with regional and international communities. In this connection, I shall refer to some of the initiatives Lesotho has undertaken.

I wish to reiterate some of the points I raised in 2007 at Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso, where I gave an account of the strides we have made and our transport sector plans.

Under their Joint Bilateral Commission of Cooperation, the Governments of the Republic of South Africa and the Kingdom of Lesotho have agreed to establish a one-stop border post aimed at facilitating rapid movement of goods, services and people between the two countries and thereby improving trade and accelerating economic growth.

The Government of Lesotho plans to invite the private sector to express interest in the development of the Maseru container terminal into a dry port. This is in keeping with the regional standards of the Southern African Development Community as well as the need to expand and improve the transportation of goods through rail.

The Government of Lesotho is in the process of replacing the obsolete navigational aids at the Moshoeshoe I International Airport. Improvements include the procurement of fire trucks to further improve the safety standards of the airport. These activities are carried out through the assistance of the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa.

The European Union has assisted the Government of Lesotho to rehabilitate 110 kilometres of paved roads covering southern and northern parts of Lesotho. We are at the final stages of creating a roads directorate that will have functional autonomy to fine-tune our implementation strategies.

We encourage our women to become technicians and engineers; at one point the ratio of female engineers to male engineers at our Department of Rural Roads was in favour of females. Our Road Fund is a second-generation fund whose governance structures are in keeping with modern governance regimes.

However, amid these promising strides, we note with concern that some development partners are now focusing their financial assistance on the social sector. The interconnection of all sectors of the economy is a step in the right direction towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

We welcome the idea of aid-for-trade, which is supposed to assist us in addressing infrastructural challenges, and we are hopeful that it will soon be made operational, as it has been on the drawing board for too long.

In conclusion, I call on the development partners to honour their commitment and redouble their efforts towards providing financial assistance to landlocked and developing countries in order to enable them to compete globally.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Shukuru Kawambwa,

Minister for Infrastructure Development of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Kawambwa (United Republic of Tanzania): I wish to thank the President for convening this important high-level meeting devoted to the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action, which the Assembly endorsed five years ago. Periodic review of the Programme's implementation permits necessary adjustments to ensure achievement of the agreed goals and targets.

In Almaty, Kazakhstan, in 2003, and then in subsequent consultations in the General Assembly, the international community recognized that high transit transport costs represented a more obstructive barrier than most favoured nation tariffs for landlocked developing countries. It has also been recognized that both transit and landlocked developing countries face enormous challenges in effectively participating in international trade.

Tanzania is very much aware of the challenges of lack of territorial access to the sea, remoteness and isolation from world markets faced by landlocked countries, and it has made concerted efforts in implementing the specific actions agreed upon in the Almaty Programme of Action.

We responded by preparing a country plan of action to be implemented by 2010. The plan has been linked to the Tanzania Development Vision 2025, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and currently the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty.

Allow me to describe the participation of Tanzania in the Almaty Programme of Action since 2003.

First, the transport sector is one of the crucial lead sectors required to address the remoteness of landlocked countries. Tanzania's geographical position gives transport infrastructure and services an important role in facilitating regional and international trade to six bordering landlocked countries.

Therefore, the policy objective on transport infrastructure development and services is to ensure that all roads, railways, seaports and inland ports serving landlocked neighbouring countries are expanded and improved to facilitate an adequate flow of international traffic to and from those countries.

Secondly, Tanzania's current transport infrastructure covers road, railway, air, water and pipeline routes linked to neighbouring landlocked and transit countries. The total road network length is 85,515 kilometres, which includes trunk and regional roads. The total length of the railway system is 3,676 kilometres. The central line, measuring 2,706 kilometres, will be linked to the three landlocked countries of Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, with links to two other landlocked countries.

We have three major sea ports — Dar es Salaam, Tanga and Mtwara — and several inland water ports.

There are also four international airports and a pipeline spanning 1,750 kilometres used to transport crude oil from Dar es Salaam to the Ndola refinery in Zambia. A 232-kilometre pipeline to transport natural gas is foreseen to be linked to neighbouring countries in the near future.

Despite the considerable road and rail network, the transport infrastructure is still inadequate. In order to address the shortcomings and to achieve sustained development of the sector, a national transport policy was adopted in 2003. The policy covers all areas of the transport sector necessary for the achievement of national social and economic goals.

The vision of the transport sector is to have safe and efficient transport services for all by 2025. The strategy is to enhance modal integration, development of transport corridors and enhancement of a multimodal transport system, with particular emphasis on safety, environment, security and access for local use as well as for neighbouring landlocked countries.

In 2007-2008 our Government launched a 10-year transport sector investment programme, with a budget of $6.2 billion for the first five years, with a view to attaining improvements in transport infrastructure and services.

Recently Tanzania negotiated Millennium Challenge Account resources and was granted a total of $698 million, a five-year grant by the United States intended to reduce poverty, stimulate economic growth and increase household incomes through targeted infrastructure investments in transport, energy, and water.

Under that grant, $373 million was allocated to transport infrastructure, targeting transit facilitation in linking landlocked neighbouring countries to the

seaports of Mtwara, Dar es Salaam and Tanga. Those initiatives are in line with the requirements of both the Almaty Declaration and its Programme of Action.

Ports are also critical infrastructure for facilitating the Almaty Programme of Action. Therefore, the Tanzania Ports Authority is about to finalize a study on port interface challenges at the port of Dar es Salaam. Those challenges include, first, improving port operation services; secondly, synergizing key transport providers and enhancing the efficiency of the port and its trade facilitation with landlocked countries; thirdly, digitizing the customs process and fast-tracking tax-compliant customers; and, fourthly, reducing congestion at the port of Dar es Salaam and bringing the Tanga and Mtwara ports up to the required international standards.

Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi, through the African Development Bank, are carrying out a railway feasibility study on linking the three countries. The sector objective of the project is to contribute to the implementation of an efficient common multinational multimodal transport programme that fosters regional economic integration and the development of zones with high agriculture, mining, industrial or commercial potentials within those countries. This railway development will give landlocked countries access to international transport links.

To improve railway services in the central development corridor a public-private partnership arrangement is being considered. The Government of the United Republic of Tanzania has finalized the restructuring of the Tanzania Railways Corporation through a joint venture with RITES Ltd of India. It is expected that that new initiative will improve the efficiency of the central development corridor, which connects the landlocked countries of Rwanda and Burundi. The same approach is being worked out for Zambia through the Tanzania Zambia Railways Authority (TAZARA).

In implementing the Almaty Declaration, Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have signed an agreement on the establishment of a central corridor transit transport facilitation agency to promote efficient transit transport systems and their maintenance over time, in the interests of all contracting parties, with a view to improving the accessibility and reliability of the central corridor.

According to the transport component of a World Bank study entitled "Africa Infrastructure Country Diagnostic", dealing with roads, railways, ports, airports and urban transport, it is estimated that Tanzania will need to invest at least $12,989 million in order to meet the basic scenario — establishing accessibility standards applicable to developed and middle-income developing countries — in a way that will increase the competitiveness of Tanzania's economy and improve social cohesiveness.

Therefore, the total investment of about $6 billion over five years by Tanzania's transport sector investment programme is only 46 per cent of the investment required, which implies that Tanzania will have to sustain that level of investment over the next 10 to 15 years to be able to meet the basic scenario objectives.

Furthermore, the report noted that Tanzania will need to spend at least 8.4 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP) to sustain that level of investment. Consequently, the Government wishes to invite the private sector to increase its level of investment in the transport sector, as the study recommended that the Government can afford to invest in the transport sector only 8.4 per cent of GDP, which is equivalent to $158 million annually.

In conclusion, Tanzania believes that efforts to implement the Almaty Programme of Action will require an effective partnership between transit and landlocked countries, on the one hand, and a global partnership between various international stakeholders, on the other. That approach will provide mutual benefits for all parties, as more effective participation in regional and international trade will enable the economies in question to benefit from economies of scale.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Yukio Takasu, chairman of the delegation of Japan.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): I have the greatest pleasure, as the representative of Japan and as a facilitator, to speak at the high-level midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action.

Japan has consistently advocated the importance of ownership and partnership as the backbone of development. Under that principle, a developing country establishes its own priorities, direction and

strategy for development and strives to realize those objectives in a spirit of ownership.

Developing countries should take primary responsibility for their development, but their efforts should be complemented by strong and sustained commitments from their global partners. That philosophy is well embodied in the Almaty Programme of Action and should provide guidance in implementation.

Since the adoption of the Almaty Programme of Action, many landlocked developing countries have shown steady progress in terms of expanding their gross domestic product and attracting foreign direct investment. That achievement has been made possible above all by the self-help efforts of landlocked developing countries, for which Japan expresses its highest respect. But it should be stressed that progress has been achieved also through their cooperation with transit developing countries, as well as partnerships with donor countries and international organizations. At the same time, we should be mindful that, as the report of the Secretary-General notes, much remains to be done to effectively implement the Almaty Programme of Action.

For the overall economic development of landlocked developing countries, the promotion of exports and the importation of essential goods at competitive prices are of the utmost importance. Being geographically disadvantaged, landlocked developing countries must make infrastructure improvement a priority. Only with the development of appropriate infrastructure can economic activities be accelerated and trade and investment promoted.

I would like to share with the Assembly some examples of Japan's partnership in those matters in different regions.

I begin with Africa, where many landlocked developing countries are located. Those countries are particularly affected by high transportation costs and weak infrastructure. It is necessary to narrow the distance between landlocked developing countries and world markets by improving power and transportation infrastructure and by connecting missing links in road networks throughout Africa, as well as improving the port facilities of transit countries.

With that in mind, Japan has taken the initiative to support the implementation of the Infrastructure Short-Term Action Plan of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), as well as other medium- and long-term infrastructure development programmes in Africa.

First, this year Japan hosted in Tokyo the fourth meeting of the Infrastructure Consortium for Africa (ICA). Then, in May, Japan co-hosted the Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV), in cooperation with the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank.

The Conference emphasized the need to focus on the development of a region-wide infrastructure. It is gratifying that there was finally also consensus among all participants that every effort should be made to strengthen cooperation to promote the development of road networks, ports and power infrastructure as an engine for growth, using ICA as the platform.

Moreover, Japan pledged up to $4 billion of soft loans to Africa over the next five years, to give momentum to regional infrastructure improvement projects so as to attract the private investment necessary for Africa's economic growth.

On the same occasion, the World Bank and the African Development Bank announced that they would extend financing, in the order of $5 billion per year, for the development of transport corridors and power networks during the same five-year period. That was a result of a TICAD IV initiative.

The improvement of transportation infrastructure should not be limited to physical infrastructure. Institutional infrastructure, such as customs, quarantine and immigration procedures at borders, needs to be improved as well.

Japan extends assistance through the Japan International Cooperation Agency to establish one-stop border posts, which will enable the necessary border procedures to be completed at one stop. For example, Japan has been supporting the establishment of a one-stop border post on the Chirundu Bridge between Zambia and Zimbabwe through various forms of assistance, including the establishment of a legal framework, staff training and the construction of bridges and other border facilities. At the Fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development, Japan announced that it would extend such assistance for 14 other border posts in Africa.

However, infrastructure improvements alone cannot increase trade and investment. There need to be strong Government efforts to improve the investment climate to attract the private sector.

Japan pledged at the Conference, as its commitment to international trade and trade facilitation, that it would support efforts to double investment from Japan to Africa. To follow up that commitment, we recently sent several joint public-private sector missions with a view to promoting trade and investment in a number of African countries, including landlocked developing countries such as Uganda, Botswana and Ethiopia.

To make our relations with least developed countries in Africa even stronger, we are opening a number of embassies — this year in Mali, Botswana and Malawi, and next year in Burkina Faso.

Japan's support for landlocked and transit developing countries goes beyond the African continent, of course. We are also very active in other parts of the world in promoting regional cooperation and integration, which are indispensable for the development of landlocked developing countries and transit countries. Our consistent support for the Asian highway project through the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific is well known. Also, countries in the Mekong region are working together on regional integration within three major corridors running east to west and north to south.

In December 2006, with our assistance, the Second Mekong International Bridge, which links Thailand with Laos, was opened, making the east-west corridor almost complete. Early this year we also pledged $20 million to facilitate the trade in commodities using that corridor.

I shall name a few examples of recent support for other landlocked developing and transit countries. Over the past five to six years we have provided Afghanistan with more than $2.5 billion for infrastructure projects, including an airport and major roads. We have also started helping with the construction of an international airport in Mongolia, helped lay a railway network in Uzbekistan, and contributed to building or improving roads, bridges and tunnels in countries such as Tajikistan, Pakistan, Nepal and Bolivia. In Central Asia, we have also sent experts on road administration and provided equipment for customs control facilities.

When we look at what many Asian countries, including our own, have experienced in recent years, we see that trade promotion clearly makes significant contributions to economic growth. It is therefore important to consider development assistance from the viewpoint of how trade is promoted.

With that in mind, since 2005 Japan has been implementing the Development Initiative for Trade, whose purpose is to operationalize Aid for Trade. The initiative aims at assisting developing countries to acquire export capacity and to further benefit from the global trading system. We will continue to provide landlocked and transit countries with assistance to facilitate trade promotion.

Many landlocked countries also face major challenges in the area of climate change adaptation, including forest degradation and desertification. In that regard, Japan has established the Cool Earth Partnership to support developing countries that are trying to achieve economic growth while reducing their greenhouse gas emissions. We have pledged $10 billion under that initiative, to be disbursed over the next five years.

We collaborate closely with international organizations, including United Nations organizations, to support the adaptation efforts of developing countries that are most vulnerable to climate change. As part of that initiative, earlier this year we supported the establishment of the Japan-United Nations Development Programme joint framework for building partnerships to address climate change in Africa, under which we very much welcome concrete project proposals for implementation.

In the informal negotiations prior to this high-level meeting, we conducted a review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. Through that process, representatives of landlocked developing countries clearly demonstrated a sense of primary responsibility for their development. Cooperation with transit developing countries, donors and international organizations is vital for that development.

We make the utmost effort to strike a balance between the needs of landlocked developing countries and cooperation with transit developing countries. I firmly believe that the draft declaration agreed upon based on those considerations has tremendous value in enabling those countries to further integrate themselves

into the global economy, and thereby benefit from access to the world market.

For the negotiations on the outcome document for this review meeting, as was the case when the Almaty Programme of Action was negotiated five years ago, Japan had the honour to serve as a facilitator. The draft outcome document, which is now appropriately titled a declaration, was successfully agreed upon three weeks before today's meeting. That achievement was made possible through the cooperation of all those concerned.

I take this opportunity to express my deepest appreciation to all for their understanding and cooperation. In particular, the invaluable contributions of High Representative Ambassador Diarra and his colleagues are greatly appreciated.

The achievement is also solid proof that the international community has been united in its support for landlocked and transit developing countries. Let us demonstrate the same spirit of cooperation in the next five years to faithfully implement the Almaty Programme of Action and the recommendations contained in the draft declaration on the midterm review, to be adopted tomorrow.

The Assembly may rest assured that Japan is determined to make every possible effort to help achieve the objectives, as a strong partner that landlocked and transit developing countries can have full confidence in.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. John W. Ashe, chairman of the delegation of Antigua and Barbuda.

Mr. Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda): The Group of 77 and China welcome the convening of this high-level meeting to conduct a midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action.

The Programme provides a comprehensive framework to address the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and transit developing countries. The time for the review is indeed opportune, given the looming 2015 deadline for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Last week's high-level event of the General Assembly made it clear that we are not on track to achieve most, if any, of the MDGs. Landlocked developing countries are among those least likely to meet the Goals.

The Group attach great importance to high-level reviews of the implementation of the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits. It is the means through which we can monitor progress in the implementation necessary to achieve the objectives.

The Group believe that the overall internationally agreed development goals and targets can only be realized through continued focus on the special needs of the most vulnerable countries. The Almaty Programme of Action remains a sound global framework for global partnerships aimed at addressing the special needs of the LLDCs. Its full implementation should be vigorously pursued.

During this two-day meeting, as the international community takes stock of progress made, lessons learned and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action to date, the Group of 77 and China hope that one result will be greater support for the efforts of the LLDCs and transit developing countries in their efforts to address the major constraints on their development. In this regard, the five priority areas agreed upon in the Programme of Action are critical.

In this increasingly competitive globalized world, trade is a vital means of international economic integration, and it is in this area that the LLDCs are at the greatest disadvantage. Therefore, the failure of the Doha Development Round to address the development challenge in international trade is of great relevance to the situation of the LLDCs.

In that context, the Group of 77 and China would like to highlight the following points.

First, the current multidimensional global crises — food, energy, climate and finance — will compound the challenges to the development objectives of the LLDCs and transit developing countries, and will constrain national efforts to achieve implementation of the Programme.

Secondly, a robust and proactive initiative, including a doubling of efforts and resources on the part of all development partners in support of the LLDCs will be required.

Thirdly, greater progress in implementation is being impeded by the persistence of long-standing

barriers to development, such as international trade barriers, lack of resources for investing in infrastructure and weak international support measures.

The Group of 77 and China is now more convinced than ever that a supportive international trading system is vital for the LLDCs, and that full implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action is both critical and urgent.

The Group emphasize the need for initiatives, including aid for trade initiatives, which aim to lower the administrative, financial and other costs to trade and to improve competitiveness and enhance productive capacity.

The Group also emphasize the need for enhanced support from development partners for building and developing the capacity of LLDCs in World Trade Organization negotiations on trade facilitation, so as to enhance their ability to take advantage of any greater market access opportunities.

The Group is concerned that LLDCs, like most developing countries, continue to be at a competitive disadvantage in attracting private investment despite creating a more attractive investment climate through reforms and policy improvements to reduce bureaucracy, lower costs and improve business procedures and public services.

There is a need, therefore, for conscious policy measures to facilitate and enhance the flow of investments, both public and private, in LLDCs in pursuit of the full implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.

Furthermore, bilateral development partners and multilateral institutions, including development banks and agencies, should redouble their efforts to encourage and facilitate public and private investment in transit and transport infrastructure development in LLDCs through innovative means, including investment guarantees.

The Group of 77 and China wish to draw attention to the following points.

First, there is a need for greater access to advanced technologies in transport systems, services and technologies that can improve product quality.

Secondly, there is a need for sufficient and predictable levels of official development assistance (ODA). This will require in the first instance that developed countries deliver on their commitments to provide 0.15 per cent to 0.20 per cent of gross national income as ODA to the LLDCs. In this regard, the Group strongly supports the call of the Secretary-General to donor countries and the international financial and development institutions to support the Trust Fund he established for the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.

The third need is for technical assistance, including the facilitation of South-South cooperation, in the construction, maintenance and operations of transport, storage and other transit-related facilities, as well as the promotion of subregional, regional and interregional transport-related programmes and projects.

The Group of 77 and China welcome the efforts of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States in compiling a set of macroeconomic indicators, including selected transport and communications statistics, to illustrate progress in implementing the Almaty Programme of Action. We urge that this initiative be further enhanced to also include the development of an acceptable set of benchmarks, in addition to the macroeconomic indicators, in order to effectively monitor implementation.

In conclusion, we emphasize that progress in the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action is integral to the implementation of all the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits, including the Millennium Declaration. It is a test of our resolve to foster a global partnership for development in our efforts to track progress of all internationally agreed development goals.

The Group of 77 and China sincerely hope that this high-level review meeting will increase the sense of urgency and renew and scale up global partnerships in support of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, and, more generally, support for the development efforts of LLDCs to achieve their national development goals in concrete, tangible and measurable ways.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Philippe Delacroix, the representative of France.

Mr. Delacroix (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries of Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Armenia, align themselves with this statement.

First, I thank the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General and the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for organizing this plenary meeting devoted to the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action.

The European Union also thanks Mr. Yukio Takasu, Permanent Representative of Japan, for facilitating negotiations on the draft final document (A/63/L.3*), which were concluded last month. I also thank the Secretary-General for his most recent report (A/63/165).

The Almaty Programme of Action is built on a partnership among landlocked and transit countries and development partners. In that spirit of partnership, the European Union would like to reaffirm before the General Assembly its commitment to promoting and implementing the priorities set forth in the Almaty Programme of Action.

The European Union is satisfied with the final document, which we approved. It is balanced and comprehensive and will lead to concrete recommendations within the framework already established by the Almaty Programme of Action. Before I address a few points that the European Union considers to be essential to ensuring development in landlocked and transit countries, I should like first to express the Union's satisfaction with the progress achieved over the past five years. Generally speaking, landlocked developing countries have been enjoying higher gross national products and foreign direct investment. For many of those countries, such progress is encouraging. I wish to stress three points in particular.

First, with respect to infrastructure, as many speakers have noted, landlocked developing countries are subject to major constraints related to development and infrastructure maintenance problems. The European Union plays a key role in that sphere by providing financial and technical assistance for developing transport, telecommunications, energy and water infrastructures. Last year, the European Union endorsed the EU-Africa Infrastructure Partnership with the aim of promoting interconnectivity in Africa, in particular in favour of the landlocked countries of that continent.

Official development assistance naturally plays an important role in remedying the lack of infrastructure. However, the private sector also plays a decisive role in financing such infrastructure, be it in landlocked or transit countries. In that respect, it is essential to promote public-private partnerships, especially by creating an investment-friendly environment.

Secondly, such infrastructure investments facilitate trade expansion. Customs bottlenecks must not slow expanding trade. Lowering customs barriers and modernizing existing customs procedures naturally encourages trade. Landlocked and transit countries should work together to ensure that red tape does not hinder trade and investment. We would recall that, as the World Bank has noted, only a quarter of the delays in the exchange of goods is due to poor infrastructure quality and that paperwork, inspections and customs formalities — in short, regulatory constraints — are the main causes of logjams and delays.

That is why the European Union is funding several customs modernization projects in landlocked developing countries. The European Union is also one of the main trading partners of the group of developing landlocked countries. In that context, it finances several trade facilitation projects in landlocked developing countries.

Thirdly, with regard to regional integration, those countries must develop through regional cooperation and integration channels. Developing landlocked and transit countries that belong to dynamic regional organizations clearly attract more foreign direct investment and integrate more efficiently into regional transport and transit infrastructure networks. The European Union provides an example of regional integration that has contributed to the economic expansion of several of its landlocked member States. Other examples — such as those of the Economic Community of West African States or the Greater

Mekong subregion — show why it is worthwhile to strengthen that level of cooperation.

The European Union shall do its share of the work to implement those various points. However, landlocked or transit countries are primarily responsible for their own development. To that end, they must unite and work together for their common development. The European Union welcomes their willingness to assume that responsibility, as demonstrated by the declaration we are preparing to adopt. In their endeavour, they can count on the active partnership of the European Union.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Ms. Raja Ghannam, Director General of Multilateral Cooperation of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Morocco.

Ms. Ghannam (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The delegation of Morocco welcomes the convening of this high-level plenary meeting devoted to the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action. We congratulate Cheikh Sidi Diarra on his outstanding work and tireless efforts to ensure the success of this meeting and to defend the interests of landlocked developing countries. My delegation welcomes the mobilization that took place during the preparations for this meeting and believes that the active participation of all stakeholders in that collective effort demonstrates that the needs of landlocked countries remain a major concern on the global development agenda.

The Moroccan delegation firmly believes in the importance of the midterm review, which will allow us to assess the progress that has been made in implementing the Almaty Programme of Action and to agree on efforts to further mobilize global partnerships to help landlocked and transit developing countries as they strive to achieve economic and social development. The outcome of the review process will certainly contribute to progress in the debate on a road map for the years ahead so that we can build on earlier efforts to meet the specific needs of the affected countries and to ensure an updated transport cooperation framework for those countries.

This high-level meeting takes place in a context that is particularly difficult for landlocked developing countries, which are encountering numerous challenges to their development. The implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action will undoubtedly help them to meet those challenges. Landlocked countries are aware of the need to promote a policy of genuine domestic and external openness, which is critical to their economic development. To that end, they have established road infrastructure programmes to connect their communications networks at the subregional and regional levels, encourage the circulation of goods and services, and promote business opportunities.

However, the failure of the World Trade Organization trade negotiations will seriously affect the hopes of those countries with respect to market access. The failure represents yet another lost opportunity for those countries to promote their exports. Similarly, in addition to the structural handicaps impeding their economic and social development policies, like other countries of the South landlocked countries are dealing with the effects of climate change, the skyrocketing costs of energy and food, and the international financial crisis.

The international community must enhance its support for landlocked and transit countries, meet their needs in terms of market access, and provide them with additional financial resources so that they can meet those challenges and achieve the objectives of the Almaty Programme of Action, the implementation of which will require the activation of global development partnerships.

As a faithful promoter of South-South cooperation, Morocco is ready to share its own expertise and know-how in the implementation of the infrastructure projects necessary to accelerating the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. During the course of various international conferences held in Morocco — notably the Ministerial Conference of Least Developed Countries and the High-Level Conference on South-South Cooperation — my country has drawn attention to the specific needs of those countries and the necessity of partnerships between landlocked developing countries, donor countries, the international financial institutions and the private sector.

The Moroccan delegation remains convinced that the recommendations of our meeting will speed up

implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and give a strong impetus to development efforts in various regions of the countries concerned.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Baki İlkin, chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Turkey.

Mr. İlkin (Turkey): It gives me pleasure to address the General Assembly on the occasion of the high-level meeting devoted to the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action. I take the opportunity to share some of our views on this important topic.

It is clear that the landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) still face serious challenges today. And those challenges are not limited to the geographical and physical constraints; the LLDCs also face certain structural inadequacies. Although these shortcomings do not fully define all the socio-economic development problems of the LLDCs, they still undermine their economic growth.

The Almaty Programme of Action provides a solid framework for international cooperation aimed at addressing the challenges faced by the LLDCs. There has already been considerable progress in implementing the Programme's priority areas. Yet we have to continue our collective efforts to create genuine partnerships between the landlocked and transit countries through regional integration schemes.

Another important dimension in that regard is promoting closer cooperation between the LLDCs and their development partners, which will pave the way for transport infrastructure development, trade facilitation and market access.

The economic development and growth of the LLDCs on the whole has been promising since the adoption of the Almaty Programme of Action. However, rising transport costs and persistent structural issues have the potential to slow down that positive trend.

Let me briefly elaborate on how Turkey plays its part to address the challenges that the LLDCs face.

In the dictionary of development, "bridge" has a number of meanings. In the case of Turkey, the notion of being a bridge has first a geographical connotation. The Anatolian peninsula has been at the epicentre of major trade routes. Starting with the historic Silk Road, Turkey has always been a conduit of close regional transport cooperation and thus trade promotion. That is still very much the case.

We all know that international trade serves as a powerful engine for development. That applies to all nations, but is certainly vital for landlocked countries. Mindful of this fact, Turkey has committed itself to the facilitation of transport links between the landlocked countries of Asia and their trading partners in Europe. Indeed, with the realization of two railway construction projects, the rail link between Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia will have been completed.

Because of its unique geographical location, Turkey is also one of the few countries that are members of both the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. These two important United Nations bodies have joined forces to harmonize and eventually link the transport networks of two of the most populous continents. Turkey has worked proactively for this historic project to become a reality.

In that framework, Turkey is party to the Agreement on the Asian Highway Network, the Trans-European North-South Motorway network project and the Trans-European Railway Project, and it is currently negotiating for the extension of the Trans-European Transport Networks to its own territory. Completion of those projects would further facilitate the access of landlocked countries to their important trading partners.

However, the provision of transport facilities is only one dimension of the problems that the LLDCs face. The landlocked developing countries need to further upgrade their transport networks and related infrastructure too. Here Turkey again plays a role. Through the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency, Turkey has in the last three years either directly undertaken or partly financed multiple transport infrastructure projects at a cost totalling $19 million. We have also been providing various training and education programmes for experts from the Central Asian republics.

I am pleased to announce today the Turkish Government's decision to contribute $200,000 to the Trust Fund established to facilitate the follow-up activities for the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.

Our collective efforts to address the special needs and problems of the LLDCs are indeed vital for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. We will continue to do our utmost in assisting the LLDCs in their development endeavours.

In conclusion, I extend our warm thanks to the Permanent Representative of Japan, Ambassador Takasu, for his diligent work as facilitator in the negotiation process of the declaration that will be formally adopted at the end of our meeting.

I also express our deep appreciation to Under-Secretary-General and High Representative Ambassador Diarra and his team for their tireless work.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. R.M. Marty M. Natalegawa, chair .an of the delegation of the Republic of Indonesia.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): I begin by thanking the President for convening this midterm review to address the special needs of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and their transit developing countries.

The review takes places at an important juncture, when Member States have reiterated their firm commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The 31 countries comprising 370 million people that we speak of today are an essential element of our broader commitment to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. This is therefore a timely opportunity to acknowledge the progress achieved but also to highlight the remaining challenges.

The declaration to be adopted at the end of the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action contains important future actions to enhance further cooperation between landlocked and transit countries, with the support of the international community. In that regard, my delegation expresses its full support for the declaration's adoption.

Indonesia recognizes the special needs of the least developed and landlocked developing countries. The high cost of international trade caused by transit and transport costs has been a persistent barrier. Even since the world market was fully opened to landlocked countries, their participation in international trade and the competitiveness of their products have been hampered by lack of territorial access to sea ports and poor transit infrastructure. The limited capacity of the infrastructure, even with territorial access to sea ports, is another challenge.

Trade is a powerful engine for growth and development. Therefore, the participation and integration of landlocked developing countries in the world trading system should be at the centre of global efforts. The full inclusion of the least developed countries and LLDCs in the World Trade Organization will address their marginalization in international trade.

Since the adoption of the Almaty Programme of Action, the gross domestic product of the landlocked developing countries as a group grew by almost 8 per cent per annum for the period 2003 to 2006. The increased GDP growth rates resulting from exports surged particularly for oil and other mineral resources. Moreover, the economic growth of the major transit countries has been encouraging, and neighbouring landlocked developing countries have benefited from the spillover effects.

Despite those encouraging signs, however, the economic growth and social well-being of landlocked countries remain very vulnerable to external shocks. That causes even more concern as the per capita income and human development of most of the LLDCs are among the lowest in the world.

Therefore, providing international support measures is an urgent task that includes a major effort to reduce transport costs, improve infrastructure and strengthen capacity-building. Since cooperation between landlocked countries and their transit neighbours is pivotal for an effective solution to many transit problems, an effective strategy to improve transit systems requires, first and foremost, action at the regional level.

Within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Initiative for ASEAN Integration Programme gives direction to and sharpens the focus of collective efforts in ASEAN to narrow the development gap between its older and newer members. The initiative also aims to merge the economy of ASEAN's newer members into the regional and global markets.

To realize that objective, at their summit meeting in Phnom Penh in November 2002 the ASEAN leaders endorsed a workplan for the period to 2008 comprising 203 projects. It is noteworthy that some of the projects,

especially those related to transportation, are in line with the Almaty Programme of Action.

Indonesia joins those who have called for international support to address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and the transit developing countries. Indonesia reiterates its determination to work in unison with the international community to create an environment that will pave the way towards promoting the well-being of all countries.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Eladio Loizaga, chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Paraguay.

Mr. Loizaga (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, on behalf of the delegation of Paraguay I would like to say how pleased we are that Mr. d'Escoto Brockmann is presiding over this high-level plenary devoted to the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action, knowing that he comes from one of the three vulnerable groups of this Organization.

I recall that during its eleventh session the General Assembly, in February 1957, adopted resolution 1028 (XI), in which Member States for the first time gave

> "full recognition to the needs of land-locked Member states in the matter of transit trade and, therefore, [accorded] them adequate facilities in terms of international law and practice in this regard, bearing in mind the future requirements resulting from the economic development of the land-locked countries".

After 46 years and subsequent technical meetings, the Almaty Programme of Action was adopted in August 2003, with a view to addressing the special needs of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) within a new global framework for transit transportation cooperation for landlocked and transit developing countries.

The Almaty Declaration, which systematized the special needs of the Group of the Landlocked Developing Countries, was the result of intense negotiations and, above all, a response to the call made by our heads of State in Goal 8 of the Millennium Declaration, in which they recognized the special needs and problems that that Group faces owing to its vulnerable geographical position. It was also possible thanks to the support and understanding shown by our brother transit countries.

We are convinced that the Almaty Programme of Action represents the necessary framework to build fairer and more equitable relations between all the Member States and international financial and development agencies, with the aim of helping overcome that disadvantage in such a way that we can participate in and share the benefits to be gained from having access to the main world markets, as well as the growing globalized and competitive economy.

At the Almaty Conference in 2003, with a view to uniting efforts to tackle the challenges faced by the Group of the LLDCs in future trade negotiations, Paraguay was appointed coordinator of the Group for matters relating to trade and development. In keeping with that mandate, the Paraguayan delegation in Geneva has been working within both the framework of Goal 8 of the Millennium Declaration and the World Trade Organization (WTO) to incorporate and defend the interests of the Group in multilateral international trade.

Similarly, in the framework of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Group of the LLDCs played an active role in the latest conferences, in particular in UNCTAD XI, which took place in São Paulo, Brazil, in June 2004, and in the recent UNCTAD XII, held in Accra, Ghana, from 20 to 25 April 2008, where there was major recognition of the need to take into account the position of the landlocked developing countries in international trade and other priority areas.

In the preparation for that recent Conference, within the framework of the Group of 77 and China, the Group of the LLDCs submitted several paragraphs related to questions of transportation, infrastructure, trade facilitation, investment, access to markets and technical cooperation, associated with the Almaty Programme of Action, which were included in the Accra Agreement and which the UNCTAD secretariat is currently implementing.

It is worth pointing out that for the first time UNCTAD has a mandate to assist landlocked countries in the area of investment. That has made it possible for UNCTAD, jointly with the World Bank and the United States Chamber of Commerce, to organize the High-Level Investment Forum "Investing in Landlocked Developing Countries", which took place in this Hall yesterday.

Within the framework of the WTO, negotiations are currently under way for the Doha Development Round, which began in 2001 and was expected to be completed by 2005. However, as we all know, the difficulties in fulfilling the mandate of the WTO Ministerial Conference have meant that negotiations are still going on.

In accordance with Priority 3 of the Almaty Programme of Action, on international trade and trade facilitation, the landlocked developing countries are focusing their efforts primarily on one of the most important chapters of the Doha Round, which is trade facilitation. It is expected that, as a result of the negotiations in that regard, the landlocked developing countries will be able to count on an international instrument that contains mandatory compliance standards and helps to remove obstacles that currently hinder trade and make it more costly, by facilitating the transit of merchandise and making it less expensive.

With a view to establishing a reference point for work in the Round, and also to have agreed common positions, we organized the first Meeting of the Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries Responsible for Trade, which took place in Asunción, Paraguay, in August 2005. As a result of the meeting, we adopted the Asunción Platform for the Doha Development Round, which is today a fundamental document in the area of trade and trade facilitation.

In August 2007, the second Meeting of the Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries Responsible for Trade was held in Ulan Bator, Mongolia, to review the Asunción Platform and adjust the objectives of the Group of the LLDCs to the Doha Round. Our efforts resulted in the Ulan Bator Declaration, in which our countries renewed their commitment to work with determination for real, beneficial results in the Doha Round.

Another important topic which landlocked developing countries have dealt with in the World Trade Organization (WTO) concerns the processes for their joining that body. Indeed, eight members of our Group are currently negotiating their entry. It is a long, costly and complicated process.

We take this opportunity to repeat our call to the members of the WTO to take into account in accession negotiations for the countries of our Group the condition of those countries, and not to request concessions going far beyond their economic, financial and development possibilities.

We also cannot miss the opportunity to point out that, in addition to the structural difficulties of transit transport, trade facilitation and restrictions on landlocked developing countries' access to international trade, there are today new challenges to sustainable development: the high oil price, the food crisis, climate change and, most recently, the financial crisis, which could have a great impact on the most vulnerable economies. It would therefore be prudent for the international community, in adopting policies and actions to deal with those crises, to bear in mind the particular situation of landlocked developing countries.

In accordance with the mandate given by the Group, and with its constant support, Paraguay has made all necessary efforts in coordinating negotiations for the draft declaration to be considered by ministers and representatives in this high-level meeting. The document reflects the state of implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action as well as the challenges to be met and commitments still to be fulfilled in the next five years.

I thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for the support that he has given the Group of the Landlocked Developing Countries since he took office in order to, above all, preserve and strengthen the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

I also pay a well-deserved tribute to Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury, the first High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, for his dedication to the cause of our Group and his efforts in the establishment of the Almaty Programme of Action five years ago.

I also recognize the work done by the Permanent Representative of Japan, Ambassador Yukio Takasu, and his team. As facilitator, he managed to reconcile the different positions, which made it possible to agree on a draft declaration.

Lastly, we express our gratitude to the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, Ambassador Cheick Sidi Diarra,

and his team of skilled professionals for their work, in accordance with the Assembly's mandate, both at the preparatory process and in the meeting for which we come together today.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Hilario G. Davide, chairman of the delegation of the Philippines.

Mr. Davide (Philippines): Since I am speaking for the first time at the sixty-third session, I begin by congratulating the President on his truly well-deserved election by acclamation. With the theme of his stewardship clearly defined in his address at the opening of the session on 16 September, the Philippines is confident that he will provide that rare brand of leadership that promises to bring the dawn of a new day for the United Nations as it grapples with the series of crises that have engulfed our world.

Strengthened as the President is by his faith, I know that he will, just as St. Paul in Corinthians 1:16 exhorted, be courageous and strong and his every act will be done with love. In this spirit, the Philippines pledges its cooperation and full support in all his efforts to pursue his noble plans for the United Nations.

The Philippines likewise commends and congratulates Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his incisive and comprehensive report on the Almaty Programme of Action at the time of its midterm review.

Finally, I extend the Philippines gratitude to Ambassador Cheick Sidi Diarra, High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, for his unceasing efforts to succeed in his multiple roles, especially in advancing the cause of those countries.

We also thank Ambassador Yukio Takasu of Japan for his crucial role in negotiating and facilitating the outcome document.

The Philippines aligns itself with the statement of the Group of 77 and China delivered by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda. Nonetheless, it wishes to speak briefly on some Philippine concerns.

It must immediately be stated that the review process provides an opportunity to make a critical examination of the accomplishments made and the challenges faced by landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries in addressing their respective development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and internationally agreed development goals.

Although the Philippines is not a landlocked country — it is an archipelago with 7,100 islands — the issue of access to markets by landlocked countries finds congruence in the challenges related to the Philippines, as its islands, big and small, separated by sometimes unfriendly water, similarly face problems in transport and infrastructure needs.

Admittedly, these challenges are not as complicated in terms of seeking third-country access for our products to be exported to wider global markets. However, the overarching objective of integration into the world economy through harmonization of policies and trade facilitation is a familiar topic of discussion in a similar grouping in which the Philippines is involved — the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum.

The similarity between the Almaty agenda topics of discussion and those of APEC pointed and led to the possibility of finding points of synergy, cooperation and mutual benefit. The global village is shrinking fast. Problems and crises in one country directly or indirectly affect the rest. The development, progress and stability of one country ought to benefit, directly or indirectly, the rest. In short, as has been said, no man can be an island entirely of himself.

This brings us to the conclusion that the logic and wisdom of global trade means looking beyond one's immediate geographic neighbours. Thus, Almaty's broader concerns must extend beyond access to the coasts. Even though the Almaty agenda is very much situated in the United Nations process — while APEC's is not — it clearly appears that if the topics of trade facilitation, policy harmonization, transit and infrastructure needs are of common interest, then there should be some advantage to a mutual awareness of discussions and best practices in each forum, especially since some APEC members are also Almaty transit countries.

This is not to advocate the establishment of any formal connection between the two forums. However, since knowledge is power and access to knowledge is free, there is no downside to being aware of information that can be useful or applicable to one's particular situation. In any event, the benefits derived from knowledge sharing are unquantifiable, and if in

the end this could lead to the process of a formal connection between the two forums, a new dimension of cooperation would be achieved for the summum bonum of all.

The Philippines supports the conclusions and recommendations in the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. The special needs of landlocked developing countries should be recognized, and, as I stated earlier, and as recommended in the Secretary-General's report, there is a role to be played by regional and subregional organizations in the implementation.

In addition, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) report on emerging issues in the implementation of the Programme of Action provides a region-specific analysis of the existing challenges and efforts made in the five identified priority areas. Again, the efforts of ESCAP and the Economic Commission for Europe to provide technical expertise on paperless trade mirror similar discussions in APEC.

The current activities focusing on the needs of the landlocked developing countries give Member States an update on the remaining challenges as the LLDCs try to situate themselves in a world now hit on all sides by crises of unimaginable proportions: climate change, the food and energy crisis, and now the financial crisis, heightened by what seems to be a failure of the bailout strategy in the United States. Verily, the global financial markets are in the midst of upheaval, in grave turmoil. The future of the Doha Development Round remains uncertain. All these sad and unfortunate developments point to extremely difficult times, and, unfortunately, the LLDCs are placed in danger of being the most negatively affected.

Our discussions here today must take these ominous developments into account. We must work harder to ensure that the Millennium Development Goals are not put further out of reach of the LLDCs. We must learn to look at the broader picture, taking into account how regional and subregional discussions can integrate the needs of LLDCs and thereby come up with mutually beneficial policies for all stakeholders.

Finally, let me put on record that the Philippines will give full support and cooperation in seeking a common way forward for the expeditious realization of the goals of the Almaty grand agenda as we move beyond this midterm review.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Piragibe dos Santos Tarragô, the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Tarragô (Brazil): My delegation associates itself with the statement made by Antigua and Barbuda, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

I am grateful for the timely convening of this meeting to take stock of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, as mandated by resolution 62/204.

The Brazilian Government is deeply conscious of the importance of achieving the goals agreed to in Almaty, where we set ourselves a road map to guide our efforts in assisting the landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) to overcome the main obstacles to their economic development, which, to a large extent, derive from their particular geographic situation.

In keeping with the Programme of Action, Brazil is committed to assisting, in particular, its landlocked neighbours — Paraguay and Bolivia — to carry out the actions identified in the five priorities. As a transit country, Brazil is ready to contribute to their realization, especially by seeking to facilitate the flow of trade of landlocked developing countries to and from international markets. With that in mind, Brazil has taken a number of initiatives over the years.

Together with our neighbours in the region, we signed in 1990 the Agreement on International Land Transportation, which provides the legal basis ensuring the transit of goods to and from the landlocked countries in our region. Thanks to that agreement, intense and dynamic transport flows have taken place ever since.

Political initiatives undertaken in our region might also contribute to the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. In particular, the creation of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUL) represents an important step towards a strengthened regional integration that will foster closer relations among its members in various fields, including through the development of physical infrastructure projects. UNASUL has already created two working groups — one on regional infrastructure and the other on finance integration — which will benefit transit to and from landlocked countries in the region.

Brazil also maintains bilateral committees on trade monitoring with Bolivia and Paraguay, which constitute important instruments for trade enhancement. That is in addition to periodic meetings at the level of Deputy Foreign Ministers.

Financing is a key issue for the promotion of regional integration and for the development of landlocked countries. In order to ensure the viability of the numerous infrastructure projects, particular attention must be paid to risk-related mechanisms of the corresponding credit operations. In this respect, Brazil has been able to extend financing in support of infrastructure works, by means of specific export credit programmes and increased capital in regional financing institutions, such as the Andean Development Corporation.

On trade, Brazilian relations with Bolivia and Paraguay have improved in the current decade. Since 2002 two-way trade between Brazil and Bolivia has grown by more than 200 per cent, and between my country and Paraguay it has grown by roughly 100 per cent.

A substantial number of Brazilian companies have invested in those two neighbouring countries, in very diverse fields including agriculture, cattle breeding, agrochemicals, furniture, metallurgy, banking, fuel distribution, energy, textiles and clothing, and oil and gas exploration.

Likewise — and of no less importance — my Government supports the view that in the Doha Round of the World Trade Organization, landlocked developing countries should receive treatment that enables them to participate more fully in the multilateral trading system and to benefit from their integration into it.

With a view to reducing the existing asymmetries in the countries of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), Brazil supported the establishment of MERCOSUR's Structural Convergence Fund. Since its inception in 2006, the fund has already financed 13 development projects in Paraguay, amounting to $48 million, in areas such as housing, roads, credit for small enterprises, the development of technological capacity and improvements in animal health.

In addition, Brazil has committed financing support for important road projects in Bolivia that will improve domestic links and facilitate the transit of goods from Brazil to ports on the Pacific coast.

Brazil and Paraguay have agreed to build a new bridge over the Paraná River, thus easing the congestion that today hampers an increased flow of vehicles between the two countries and to the ports on the Atlantic coast.

Finally, through a series of bilateral and regional initiatives, Brazil has shown its commitment to the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, and it intends to continue to do so. We have been working together with partners in the region to create conditions that may facilitate the development of our landlocked neighbours and reduce the current disequilibria.

We believe that the trading, financing and transport benefits that we, transit countries, may be able to extend to our neighbouring landlocked countries will also wind up being advantageous to ourselves, as those benefits will have a positive impact on the development of our whole region.

Programme of work

Mr. Yáñez-Barnuevo (Spain), Vice-President, in the Chair.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to inform members that on Monday, 6 October, the General Assembly will take up, as the first item, the request by the Secretary-General (A/63/232), for the inclusion of an additional item in the agenda of the sixty-third session, namely, "Judges of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991".

Thereafter the Assembly will consider agenda item 100, "Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization".

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.

United Nations A/63/PV.19

General Assembly
Sixty-third session

Official Records

19th plenary meeting
Friday, 3 October 2008, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann ..... (Nicaragua)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Enkhbayar (Mongolia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

High-level plenary meeting devoted to the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action

Agenda item 52 (*continued*)

Groups of countries in special situations

(b) Specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries: outcome of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation

Report of the Secretary-General (A/63/165)

Draft resolution (A/63/L.3*)

The Acting President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Park In-kook, chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Park In-kook (Republic of Korea): I thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this important meeting in a timely fashion. I also wish to express my appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the insightful report (A/63/165) before us. I believe that the report will serve to guide us well. It succinctly summarizes the progress made, the lessons learned and the constraints encountered in the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.

Five years ago, in Almaty, Kazakhstan, the participants at the International Ministerial Conference came up with a comprehensive road map to galvanize international solidarity and partnership to assist landlocked developing countries (LLDCs). The outcome of the Conference, the Almaty Declaration and Programme of Action, reflected the strong commitment of the international community to address the special needs of and challenges faced by landlocked developing countries, as called for in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

In that regard, my delegation takes note of the Secretary-General's overall assessment that, over the past five years, landlocked and transit developing countries, with the support of their development partners, have made tangible progress in implementing the specific actions agreed upon in the Almaty Programme of Action.

As a nation that has struggled against the poverty trap during the last several decades, the Republic of Korea sympathizes with the hardships of the landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and is committed to supporting their efforts to achieve sustainable development. The new Government of the Republic of Korea has made contributing to the international community as a trusted partner one of the pillars of its foreign policy. To that end, we are strengthening our role in official development assistance (ODA) programmes.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

08-53512 (E)

Since 2000, our ODA has tripled in volume, with our assistance to Africa increasing threefold over the past three years. We now plan to triple our current ODA to reach over $3 billion by the end of 2015. As ODA remains the major source of funding for infrastructure development in landlocked countries, this record scale-up of our ODA volume will contribute to helping those countries to overcome geographical impediments and pave the way for tangible economic growth and prosperity.

Trade has long been recognized as the engine for development. The Republic of Korea has long utilized trade as a locomotive for our economic growth. Against this backdrop, we are well aware of the pivotal role that trade can play in the a country's development. In this context, my Government extends duty-free and quota-free access to least developed countries. At present, 16 out of 31 landlocked developing countries enjoy the programme my Government provides. We will also increase our contribution to the Integrated Framework for LDCs and will expand our training programmes on the rules and regulations of the World Trade Organization.

Efficient transport infrastructure and services are prerequisites for the development of landlocked developing countries and will facilitate their integration into the international trading system and the larger global economy. However, there are still large gaps in terms of financing that cannot be addressed without the involvement of the private sector. To galvanize the flow of private capital into infrastructure development, last year the Korean Government hosted the Ministerial Conference on Public-Private Partnerships for Infrastructure Development. The Ministerial Conference on Transport held in Korea in 2006 was yet another effort of my Government to contribute to the cause of infrastructure development.

The digital divide also remains of major concern for landlocked developing countries, with only 2.9 Internet users per 100 inhabitants in 2006. If this gap continues to widen, it may evolve into a serious obstacle that prevents landlocked developing countries from virtually engaging in the international economic system, which is increasingly dependent on information and communication technologies. In this regard, the Republic of Korea is ready to do its part to bridge the digital divide by sharing the technology and know-how that have helped us to enjoy the largest concentration of broadband Internet users in the world.

All in all, this midterm review shows that, although some progress has been made, much more needs to be done to fulfil the commitments we pledged to keep in the Almaty Programme of Action. The development of landlocked developing countries cannot be realized through the efforts of any single player. Rather, it requires the joint efforts of landlocked and transit developing countries, the international community and the United Nations.

I can assure the Assembly that the Republic of Korea, together with other development partners, will stand firmly with landlocked developing countries. We will support their noble endeavours to overcome the special problems caused by their lack of territorial access to the sea and their remoteness and isolation from world markets.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Yao Wenlong, representative of China.

Mr. Yao Wenlong (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation offers its congratulations on the successful convening of this meeting. It associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and would like to express its appreciation to Under-Secretary-General Diarra and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for the all they have done in preparation for this meeting.

Since the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action began five years ago, landlocked developing countries have, thanks to the vigorous support of the international community, including the transit developing countries, and by virtue of their own unremitting efforts, made noticeable progress in their economic and social development. The Secretary-General's report (A/63/165) shows that, for landlocked developing countries, between 2003 and 2006, gross domestic product, foreign direct investment, and official development assistance (ODA) grew by an annual average of 8 per cent, 11.55 per cent and 21.4 per cent, respectively — higher than the averages for the developing countries as a group in the same period. Those figures clearly prove that the Programme of Action has played an important role in promoting the economic and social development of landlocked developing countries.

What cannot be ignored, however, is the fact that there has not been a fundamental change in those countries' disadvantaged position in the world economic system. Nor has there been a fundamental improvement with respect to their special difficulties, such as inefficient transport, weak infrastructure and high costs of trade. Since 2007 in particular, three intractable problems — in the fields of finance, energy and food — erupted onto the scene in quick succession, making the development challenges facing landlocked developing countries more acute and adding to the uncertainty of their development environment.

In 2007, landlocked developing countries accounted for less than 1 per cent of international trade, constituted half of the 20 countries with the lowest human development index, and represented 9 out of the 10 countries with the world's highest per-container cost for import-export trade. What is more, the recent hikes in energy prices have significantly increased the transit transport costs of landlocked developing countries. There is still a long way to go before all objectives contained in the Programme of Action are fully met.

It is the consensus of the international community that landlocked developing countries should be assisted in attaining sustainable development. In the face of the difficulties presented by world economic development, it is of great significance that we are gathered here for the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action. We should use this midterm review as an opportunity to systematically assess the implementation of the Programme of Action, comprehensively prioritize our future cooperation, push for the follow-up of relevant commitments and set out to respond to new development challenges. With that in mind, China proposes that the international community focus its attention on the following endeavours.

First, political commitments should be reaffirmed. The Almaty Programme of Action embodies the international community's firm resolve and solemn commitment to help landlocked developing countries and constitutes the specific plan of action and the basic framework of cooperation for that purpose. We must take this as central in furthering the spirit of global partnership, honouring all commitments made under the Programme of Action and comprehensively supporting the sustainable development of those countries.

Secondly, we must actively respond to challenges. The implementation of the Programme of Action should keep pace with the times. The relevant international agencies should systematically assess the impact and repercussions of new development challenges for landlocked and transit developing countries. For its part, the international community should focus on helping those two groups of countries meet such new challenges as climate change, the world economic slowdown, the turbulence in the financial markets and the surge in energy prices.

Thirdly, development assistance should be increased. Development assistance represents a crucial factor in efforts to help landlocked developing countries break out of their development difficulties. The international community, and developed donor countries in particular, should reverse the trend seen in recent years of declining rather than increasing ODA. The commitment to allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross national income (GNI) to ODA should be expeditiously translated into action, effectively increasing the share of ODA dedicated to the financing of infrastructure development and other production sectors. The scale, sustainability and predictability of funding should continue to be increased.

Fourthly, trade preferences should be augmented. Trade is an important engine for the sustainable development of landlocked developing countries. The international community should vigorously push for an early resumption of the World Trade Organization Doha Round of negotiations and an early conclusion of a package agreement that genuinely reflects the theme of development. It should continue to expand trade facilitation and preferences in favour of landlocked developing countries and, through assistance in trade and other measures, support them in building their trade capacity so that they can significantly engage in the international trade system and benefit from it.

Fifthly, cooperation mechanisms should be strengthened. Well-coordinated cooperation mechanisms constitute the institutional guarantee for the successful implementation of the Programme of Action. The international community should continue to strengthen policy coordination and information-sharing, effectively promote regional and subregional economic cooperation, vigorously support public-private cooperation and explore in depth innovative financing mechanisms. Meanwhile, the Office of the High Representative should also continue to promote

cooperation and coordination between the relevant international organizations and United Nations agencies.

China is a transit developing country, and parts of its territory have landlocked features. Some of our inland provinces have worse natural conditions than some landlocked countries. China thus has first-hand experience of the special difficulties confronting landlocked developing countries. China has always energetically supported landlocked developing countries in their development efforts, actively promoted and engaged in transit transport cooperation, continuously strengthened support measures in favour of those countries and actively honoured the commitments made under the Programme of Action.

Currently, China contributes more than 10 per cent of world economic growth, with the spillover effects providing a powerful impetus to the economic growth of neighbouring landlocked developing countries. China is active in advancing regional economic cooperation in Central Asia, North-East Asia and the Greater Mekong subregion. That cooperation benefits the landlocked developing countries in Asia. Through mechanisms such as the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, we have also continued to increase our support for the landlocked developing countries in Africa. At the United Nations high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals last week, Premier Wen Jiabao announced six concrete measures that we are undertaking to provide assistance within our capacity to fellow developing countries, including landlocked developing countries, in the areas of agricultural development, responding to the food crisis, personnel training, debt relief and cancellation, trade preferences and energy.

China will continue to follow the principles of equitable consultation, mutual interest and benefit and common development, to honour in full and in depth all commitments contained in the Programme of Action and to share development opportunities with landlocked developing countries in a joint effort to meet the challenges of development.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Giadalla A. Ettalhi, chairman of the delegation of the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

Mr. Ettalhi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we would like to express our deep appreciation for the timely holding of this meeting and to congratulate Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session.

The special needs and problems confronting landlocked developing countries have been recognized by the United Nations in the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2), as well as by other relevant international organizations. They include the fact that those countries do not have access to the sea and suffer isolation from international markets, which has a negative impact on their development efforts and constrains their ability to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and on their development efforts in general. That is all well known.

The Almaty Programme of Action aims to confront the challenges faced by landlocked and transit developing countries. The Programme clearly indicates that landlocked status is a challenge, not a destiny, and that international solidarity and cooperation can contribute to overcoming those difficulties and challenges. Many transit developing countries that are neighbours of landlocked developing countries bear additional burdens as a result of transit transport requirements and their need to build and strengthen the infrastructure for roads, maintenance and service programmes as well as to develop the human resources and administrative and financial systems needed for those facilities.

Therefore, the formation, strengthening and maintenance of an effective transit system pose a great challenge to landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and to other developing countries as well. This is what my country, Libya, is facing.

The costs entailed are often greater than the financial capabilities of those countries and there is no doubt that development partners can support and bolster those countries' efforts to create effective means and systems of transit transport and develop the required human resources and capabilities. We affirm that regional cooperation can play an important role in resolving the problems encountered in transit transport, making it easier and less costly by allowing for the pooling of resources and capabilities, and by coordinating and removing obstacles to cross-border passage and by guaranteeing that products have access to nearby and overseas markets. It is gratifying that the development of basic infrastructure for transit transport

is one of the national concerns of African countries. It is also among the strategic priorities of development. We support the policies and initiatives made by the African Union, the New Partnership for Africa's Development and regional economic groupings in the African continent, all of which aim to bolster the efforts of those countries and strengthen regional cooperation among them.

We confirm the need to establish and bolster effective systems for transit transport in Africa by forging effective partnerships between LLDCs and transit developing countries within the framework of regional integration. We call upon international and regional financial institutions to offer more financial and technical aid. This aid should be coordinated to develop the infrastructure of transit transport and to focus on bridging the gaps that remain in ground transport networks so as to connect landlocked countries to the rest of the African countries and give priority to the basic infrastructure needs within the framework of assistance for trade. Additionally, overseas development assistance funds allocated to building these structures should be increased.

In view of its belief in the need for African integration, Libya supports policies and initiatives that aim to connect African countries through roads and networks, as these are fundamental to the development and advancement of the productive and service sectors in landlocked countries. Additionally, they would activate trade exchange with the rest of the countries in the continent, on one hand, and trade between those countries and international markets, on the other.

Moreover, my country has undertaken a large project called the Al-Qadhafi Highway. Here, my country is working on building desert roads to landlocked countries on two axes, one in eastern Libya and one in the west of the country. We are currently devoting great efforts to implement this large project. Such efforts contribute to providing opportunities for economic and social stability. This will reduce the reasons for illegal immigration and lessen the resulting economic, social and security repercussions and risks.

In closing, my country confirms the need to support and bolster efforts made by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, which aim to mobilize the necessary support and help implement the Almaty Programme of Action. This is also considered one of the main areas of cooperation among the countries of the South because most landlocked countries and transit countries are developing countries as well. Based on this, a successful programme of action will increase transactions among the countries of the South and will achieve the economic integration that serves the interests of all.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Peter Maurer, chairman of the delegation of the Swiss Confederation.

Mr. Maurer (Switzerland): Geography may be a challenge, but it is not destiny. Landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) face specific hurdles in their development that countries bordering on the sea do not. But those hurdles can be addressed, as we are doing successfully with the Almaty Declaration and Programme of Action. The Declaration and the Programme have contributed significantly to putting the special needs of LLDCs on the political agenda. This midterm review provides us with a welcome opportunity to take stock of the progress made, to analyse existing gaps and to identify the action needed to fill these gaps. The excellent report prepared by the Secretary-General and his collaborators provides a number of insights worthy of our attention.

Allow me to focus on just a few of them. First, in Almaty we underestimated the spill-over effects produced by the spectacular growth of emerging economic powerhouses. Their markets provide at least some landlocked countries with a regional alternative or complement to overseas markets. The negative effects of high transportation costs and dependence on a functioning transit corridor can be significantly reduced when these strong performers are in the immediate neighbourhood of LLDCs. The increasing sophistication of these emerging economies should also contribute, in the medium term, to nurture the diversification of the export structure of countries in the region and hence, to reduce the dependence of many LLDCs on highly volatile commodity prices.

Furthermore, it is our hope that the high export earnings of emerging markets will provide the LLDCs with additional investment capital, thus facilitating the regional integration also at the level of capital markets. The special needs of landlocked developing countries and the further strengthening of South-South trade are issues that need to be tackled in parallel. While

continuous support by all development partners to LLDCs is crucial, strong leadership by the emerging economies willing and ready to shoulder their part of the responsibility for international economic stability and prosperity is also called for.

Secondly, we have to re-emphasize the importance of freedom of transit. In the context of the ongoing negotiations at the World Trade Organization (WTO) on trade facilitation, Switzerland and a number of LLDCs have jointly submitted a textual proposal on the clarification and improvement of Article V of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. The proposal not only seeks to strengthen freedom of transit and to create discipline with regard to transit fees and charges, but also attempts to curb the discriminating effects that regional or bilateral transit agreements may have on transit, including by tackling quota systems. Ambitious wording on transit in a future WTO agreement on trade facilitation is not enough in and of itself, but it sets the stage for a much larger host of concrete trade facilitation measures all along the supply chains so as to truly establish viable, predictable and reasonably economical transit routes.

Thirdly, the Almaty Programme of Action has helped to coalesce a wide range of countries facing similar concerns under one heading — the landlocked developing countries. At the same time, transit countries and development partners have joined the process in the spirit of partnership. Yet, while the Programme has been firmly established and recognized, further progress is needed. The priorities and needs of landlocked developing countries have become further differentiated. Their starting points, comparative advantages, economic policies and transport infrastructures are developing over time in response to both world market and stronger regional integration.

It is therefore important that international organizations, such as the World Bank and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, continue to work towards common and reliable indicators and monitoring. Reliable targets and indicators help ensure that limited resources are put to use where they are most needed in each single case. By providing an objective basis of work, they also facilitate crucial bilateral and regional cooperation on transit and other trade-related facilitation issues.

Geography can indeed be a challenge, but geography is no destiny. Switzerland, a landlocked country itself, remains deeply committed to assisting landlocked developing countries to better integrate themselves into world markets.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the speaker from Ethiopia.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): Allow me to begin by expressing our deep appreciation to the President for having organized this important and timely high-level meeting as part of the ongoing sixty-third session of the United Nations General Assembly, over which he is already presiding most efficiently. My delegation wishes to assure him of its readiness to render its utmost cooperation to assist him in efficiently carrying out his responsibilities in this regard, as well as in others relating to his high office.

I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General for his in-depth and comprehensive report on the issues that concern landlocked countries. There is no doubt that the report will make a significant contribution to these review deliberations.

We have carefully noted that the Secretary-General's report has captured in detail developments that have taken place in landlocked developing countries since the launch of the Almaty Programme of Action in 2003. As the report clearly indicates, a number of landlocked countries are giving due attention to the establishment of fundamental transit policies, while also engaging in infrastructure development. Although those countries, like all others, are adversely affected by the toll of rising food and fuel prices, their economies have also benefited from those otherwise negative surges.

The fact that the needs of landlocked countries are receiving more attention than ever before in many international forums is indeed reassuring. Certainly, their unique situation and their common predicaments in particular are becoming major items on the agenda at high-level multilateral trade discussions, such as the twelfth United Nations Conference on Trade and Development held last April in Ghana, and the United Nations panel discussion on the investment needs of least-developed landlocked countries, conducted here in New York the day before yesterday. We are indeed encouraged by those positive trends.

However, in spite of those encouraging developments, landlocked countries continue to face several challenges due to their geographical handicap, which puts serious constraints on their efforts to achieve poverty reduction goals and improve the standard of living of their populations. Thus, much remains to be done in terms of mobilizing concrete support to help better address the economic predicaments faced by those countries.

As clearly reflected in the Almaty Programme of Action, the most important measures that should be taken to mitigate and do away with the difficulties of landlocked developing countries are realistic and suitable strategies crafted by those countries themselves. It is, of course, of equal importance that those countries collaborate with their neighbouring coastal States to create mutually beneficial and efficient transit transport, customs and other relevant infrastructure systems. Most of those coastal States that border landlocked countries are themselves faced with a lack of efficient infrastructure systems and do not enjoy optimal regional economic integration.

Due to the geographical distances involved and costly and cumbersome transit systems, landlocked developing countries require special market access to leverage their less competitive position in the international market. They need financial and technical assistance in their endeavours to build and overhaul major infrastructure systems, including, among others, railways, highways and dry ports. They need technical assistance in modernizing transit customs procedures.

Landlocked countries should be able to benefit from all the support they need to overcome their supply-side trade constraints. It is high time that we created the conditions to enable smooth and harmonious interplay between the Almaty Programme of Action and the World Trade Organization (WTO) Aid for Trade Initiative so as to meaningfully support the capacity of landlocked countries, most of which fall under the category of least-developed countries and suffer huge supply-side constraints.

Landlocked countries must continue to advocate for international laws and conventions to ascertain their rights to uninterrupted freedom of transit. They should strive to see improved international legal instruments, such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and WTO General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade instruments, particularly regarding the relationship of landlocked countries vis-à-vis their coastal neighbours. To that end, we should also engage in a concerted effort with other groupings, such as the Group of 77, to which most of us belong.

In order to better coordinate our efforts and avoid unnecessary duplication, we should also liaise effectively with our respective regional groupings in Africa, Asia and Latin America so as to solicit their valuable contributions in that important endeavour. Moreover, such collaboration could help avoid possible confusion with other, similar needs of those groupings.

Ethiopia, for its part, has ventured to take a number of steps aimed at ensuring its competitive and comparative advantages in the realm of international trade. With a combination of an agriculture-led, export-oriented strategy and an emphasis on the development of key infrastructure systems that are essential to bring about rapid growth, the country is making promising strides on both fronts. It is also focusing on achieving better export earnings and minimizing the difficulties posed by geographic barriers through an emphasis on non-traditional export items, such as flowers, which can easily be transported by air.

Thanks to the diversification of its export produce, inter alia, Ethiopia has been able to register double-digit growth in its gross domestic product over the past four years. That demonstrates Ethiopia's commitment to adhering to the ethos and principles of the Almaty Programme of Action.

The establishment of a new dry-port services enterprise earlier this year, the expansion of road networks within and along major transit corridors, the improvement of the existing old railroad system while also investing in the construction of a new one, and the overhauling of the country's telecommunications and energy sectors are among the major programmes in the overall national endeavour.

As we pointed out at the panel discussion on attracting foreign direct investment to landlocked developing countries, held here at United Nations the day before yesterday, it is important to reiterate today that the Government of Ethiopia raised and allocated its own resources to finance most of the start-up costs of all of those large-scale projects. However, in the spirit of the Almaty Programme of Action, we expect to receive timely and adequate financial and technical assistance from our development partners so as to

increase our resources for completing those important projects.

We firmly believe that this midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action should take proper stock of lessons learned in the past with a view to further galvanizing existing global partnerships that are geared to assisting landlocked countries in the light of their particular situations.

In that respect, it is worth noting that the outcome of the Africa regional meeting on the review of the Almaty Programme of Action, which took place in mid-June 2008 in Addis Ababa under the auspices of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa reflected the fact that, among other things, in order for the Almaty Programme of Action to be more concrete in implementation, concerned bodies such as the Office of the High Representative and regional financial mechanisms should take the lead in advocating and contributing to the investment of new resources that are essential to addressing the needs of landlocked countries.

The regional meeting also underlined the importance of coordinating our efforts with the group of least developed countries, our World Trade Organization negotiators in Geneva, and particularly such regional groupings as the Africa Group, in order to avoid the unproductive duplication of efforts and, at the same time, strike the right balance in advocating for our common interests.

Mr. Abani (Niger), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Finally, my delegation wishes to seize this opportunity to reassure the Assembly that Ethiopia will do whatever it can to implement fully and in an unfettered manner the Almaty Programme of Action, as well as the outcome of this important review deliberation. Together, we should strive for the concrete realization of the many ideals and proposals put forth since the inception of the Almaty Programme of Action. We must also work in unison to give further substance to some of the positive results that we have already brought about.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. T. Vance McMahan, representative of the United States of America.

Mr. McMahan (United States of America): The outcome document of the midterm review and the Secretary-General's detailed, comprehensive report on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action (A/63/165) provide excellent bases for our deliberations this week.

We note that the outcome document and the report affirm the value of regional and subregional cooperation and of accession to multilateral conventions, transport policy reform, and trade facilitation measures including,

> "the commercialization and liberalization of transport services and efforts to improve institutional, procedural, regulatory and managerial systems and reduce excessive paperwork and red tape requirements" (*A/63/165, para. 81*).

Those reforms are, in our view, essential for effective participation in the world economy and for deriving full benefit from international assistance.

In 13 landlocked developing countries today, the United States, through the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), is providing national development strategies with unprecedented levels of assistance, the transfer of know-how and technology, and collaborative institution-building. Our partnerships are aimed at transformation and at achieving a permanent boost to rates of economic growth.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation currently has signed large grant agreements — called compacts — with 10 landlocked developing countries for over $1.9 billion. In Mongolia, the MCC is funding a $188 million project to rebuild and commercialize the national railroad system. Another $23-million project is aimed at strengthening the legal infrastructure for property rights near Mongolia's rapidly growing urban centres. In conjunction with the Asian Development Bank, $25 million will go to establishing a vocational training network for over 30 career paths essential to building an urban, industrial-based economy.

In Armenia, the MCC is providing $235 million to increase economic performance in the agriculture sector through strategic investments in rural roads and irrigated agriculture. The compact with Armenia will directly benefit approximately 750,000 people, or 75 per cent of the rural population.

The MCC is also working with Mali to transform agricultural production, reducing vulnerability to drought and targeting agro-processing and higher-value crops. The Government's $235-million Alatona Irrigation Project, financed by MCC, will create 16,000 hectares of new irrigation-fed agricultural land. Such infrastructure improvement will be accompanied by programmes to improve land tenure, establish agricultural credit and lending, and enhance water management. Another $184 million from the MCC will be used to rebuild Mali's airport in order to expand the country's access to trade.

The MCC initiative is about helping our development partners achieve their national priorities based upon common values. MCC programmes are premised on the expectation that once the foundation of accountable public management and a regulatory environment that encourages private economic activity are in place, investment in people and infrastructure will have a permanent and transforming impact on economic growth. We see it as a partnership in which large-scale external assistance for infrastructure and ambitious projects will succeed because the conditions for lasting national development are present.

MCC does not replace our traditional foreign assistance to landlocked developing countries; rather, it supplements it. In 2006, landlocked developing countries received a total of $4.3 billion in economic assistance from the United States, including the MCC disbursements. The United States also provides assistance to landlocked countries for implementing and strengthening macroeconomic and business and investment reform. In the past year, our teams provided recommendations to Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda on streamlining business regulation.

In conjunction with the World Bank, the Business Environment Improvement Project launched by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) assisted the Kyrgyz Republic with an ambitious programme of administrative change and regulatory simplification. The result was that the Kyrgyz Republic jumped from 99 to 68 in the World Bank's *Doing Business* ranking, landing third among the top 10 reformers for 2008.

In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, a USAID collaborative programme with the Government established one-stop business registration and customs documentation. The time it takes to register a company fell from over a month to as little as three days, and waiting times at the border dropped by 75 per cent.

The United States Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) also facilitates investment in landlocked developing countries. An initial investment by OPIC of approximately $15 million has leveraged another $90 million in African capital for the rehabilitation and improvement of the Nacala corridor in south-eastern Africa. The transaction includes significant port improvements and will contribute to a seamless multimodal transportation system running from Mozambique into Malawi and Zambia. OPIC also provides political risk insurance, as in the example of $142 million in coverage for the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, the second longest in the world.

We recognize the challenges faced by landlocked developing countries — the high cost of transportation and of inputs, the corresponding impact on export competitiveness and dependence on regional neighbours for access to overseas markets. We believe, however, that it is fair to say that the geographic position of landlocked developing countries, their centrality, can also be an advantage.

A multilateral framework for cooperation in transit and trade, infrastructure development and regional approaches to problem-solving should help landlocked developing countries explore possibilities for competitive advantage and profitable niche markets. In our view, the Almaty Programme of Action is an important and necessary initiative for realizing the full potential of landlocked developing countries and achieving and sustaining the Millennium Development Goals.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abdullah Hussain Haroon, chairman of the delegation of Pakistan.

Mr. Haroon (Pakistan): Pakistan welcomes the convening of the high-level meeting on the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action. We view this process and its outcome as an important step towards meaningfully addressing the special needs and concerns of landlocked developing States. We are confident that this timely endeavour will translate into a comprehensive course of correction exercise aimed at learning from past experiences with a view to guiding our future work.

We meet at a difficult time to carry out this important midterm review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, which addresses the special needs of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) within a new global framework for transit transport cooperation for landlocked and transit developing countries. Only recently, we carried out two other equally important reviews at the United Nations on Africa's development needs and its achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The message from those high-level engagements was clear. Implementation is the biggest challenge and lack of finances remains the greatest obstacle to realizing the development promises and commitments made here.

The unfolding global development emergency manifested through the triple crises of food, fuel and finance is making the implementation challenge even more complex and daunting, not just for the LLDCs, but also for their transit neighbours, which are often of broadly similar economic structures and faced with similar scarcities of resources.

An effective strategy to improve transit transport systems has also become particularly relevant in the wake of rising commodity and high oil prices. A coherent strategy should enable significant economies of scale by using trade as an instrument for achieving development objectives through improved shares for both landlocked and transit developing countries in global trade.

Pakistan strongly supports the LLDCs in their quest for greater and across the board recognition of their special needs, both financial and technical. We also remain committed to helping them within our limited means to overcome the formidable obstacles and pursue their development goals. However, the requirements of establishing and maintaining efficient transit transport systems are of such magnitude that landlocked and transit developing countries cannot accomplish much on their own. A concerted effort is therefore required to evolve policies and mechanisms which can generate the financial resources required to invest in the transport infrastructure projects. Such investments need increased financial assistance from the development partners, donor countries and international financial and development institutions.

Similarly, an early, successful and development-oriented completion of the World Trade Organization Doha Round of trade negotiations, allowing the removal of distortions in the global trading regime and providing enhanced market access, particularly to the LLDCs, has never been more important and urgently needed as it is now. The continuing impasse in the Doha trade negotiations is alarming and a source of serious concern.

Pakistan, as a transit developing country, actively participates in the process of the Almaty Programme of Action and remains committed to providing easy, efficient and expeditious transit access to our landlocked neighbours — especially Afghanistan — to help them expand their international trade. In fact, promoting regional connectivity and making Pakistan a regional transit hub is an integral part and central pillar of our national vision for the trade and transport sectors. Pakistan's location at the crossroads of South, Central and West Asia is indeed helpful in that regard.

To that end, as part of our national trade corridor programme, Pakistan is not only improving and upgrading its existing logistics and transport infrastructure, including highways and the railway system, but has also embarked on constructing new road networks, seaports, airports and other related facilities. Various linkage roads up to Gwadar, a modern port in western Pakistan, are also being constructed. With the commissioning of the Gwadar port, Pakistan will be able to provide dedicated, efficient and cost-effective transit trade and port facilities to our landlocked neighbours, including the latest facilities for cargo vessels at par with any modern port.

On the services sector, the Government of Pakistan is in the process of revamping the entire customs procedure, including the introduction of the Customs Reform Project. The national trade corridor programme provides specific targets and timelines for achievement in all critical areas, including trade facilitation.

Before I conclude, let me also avail myself of this opportunity to thank Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, and his team for their good work in making our deliberations productive and useful. I would also like to thank Ambassador Yukio Takasu of Japan for successfully facilitating the intergovernmental consultations to finalize the outcome of the midterm review meeting.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Zahir Tanin, chairman of the delegation of Afghanistan.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): I am pleased to address the high-level meeting of the General Assembly devoted to the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action. I would like to convey my thanks to the President of the General Assembly for his efforts to ensure the continuing support of the international community to the landlocked countries. I also commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his strong leadership and focus on the implementation of the Programme, and express my appreciation to High Representative Cheick Sidi Diarra and his Office for their excellent preparatory work for the meeting.

Since the adoption of the Almaty Programme of Action five years ago, many landlocked and transit countries, with the help of their development partners, have achieved certain progress towards realizing the aims of that document. However, due to a variety of impediments facing the landlocked countries, many of them, including Afghanistan, have not yet been able to fully use trade as an effective instrument to achieve their development goals.

Among the many areas of progress in Afghanistan, first, the Government of Afghanistan has expanded the role of the private sector to invest in transport and transit infrastructure. We have established the Afghan National Trade and Transit Facilitation Committee. In that Committee, public and private representatives deliberate on major trade, transit and transport policies and procedures and together decide on relevant courses of action.

Secondly, it has simplified and standardized the documents and forms used for border transactions. Thirdly, it has taken steps to modernize border crossings by automating, purchasing modern equipment and constructing new facilities.

Fourthly, in 2007 and 2008, the Government, with the assistance of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, conducted surveys to identify transit challenges at the borders in cross-border control zones and adopted procedures to address them.

Fifthly, it has begun negotiations with neighbouring countries to address the shared challenges that increase the cost of goods and services to the detriment of traders and consumers. As a result, we resolved our long-standing problem with Pakistan of the transit and trans-shipment of fresh Afghan products through the Wagah border to India.

In the priority area of infrastructure development and maintenance of the Almaty Programme of Action, first, Afghanistan is building new roads. In the past seven years, Afghanistan has repaired or built nearly 7,000 kilometres of existing and new roads, including the ring road and secondary roads. By 2010, we hope to complete the national ring road and connect it to our neighbours to the North, South, West and East.

Secondly, Afghanistan is building new railroads. As part of a copper mine contract with a Chinese consortium, a railway system connecting Central Asia to South Asia through Afghanistan is planned. Afghanistan is also working on joining the trans-Asia railway. In addition, the seventh Ministerial Meeting on Transport and Communications of the Economic Cooperation Organization confirmed that the Istanbul-Teheran-Islamabad railway will pass through Afghanistan.

Thirdly, we are improving our air infrastructure. In the past few years, three private passenger and two Afghan air cargo companies have begun operation in Afghanistan. Also, we have just completed the construction of the new Kabul international terminal and the upgrading of its runway. We are also renovating and upgrading seven airports in other parts of the country.

Fourthly, we are improving communications, which is the biggest success story of Afghanistan. In 2002, there were an estimated 38,000 landlines. Today, there are almost 6 million telephone subscribers in the country, as well as four providers and an investment of nearly $1 billion dollars. By the end of 2009, we will have completed the national fibre-optic line and connected it to two neighbouring countries. The improvement in communications services will allow better tracking of information of import and transit cargo and connectivity to the region and the world.

Fifthly, we are constructing pipelines and transferring electric energy. The agreement to transfer natural gas from Turkmenistan to Pakistan and India through Afghanistan has been finalized. In addition, last month, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed to establish the secretariat of the Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and

Trade Project in Kabul to expedite the transfer of over 1,300 megawatts of electricity from the two Central Asian countries to Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In the priority area of monitoring and follow-up on agreements, Afghanistan is again joining conventions, such as the Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets, to meet standards and accomplish the reform of the transit and freight sectors, as well as following up on Afghanistan's membership of the International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations.

Despite those areas of progress, Afghanistan has been facing many challenges in meeting the objectives of the Almaty Programme of Action, notably with the much-needed support of the international and regional communities.

First, while we appreciate the financial support of the international community towards improving our transport and transit infrastructure, a significant portion of the donor pledges has still not been delivered. Furthermore, much of that aid is being delivered without full regard for the goals of the Afghan Government and the Almaty Programme of Action. Therefore, we urge the international community to increase its assistance to Afghanistan in the following priority areas of the Almaty Programme of Action: to help extend our roads to complete the missing links of the regional network; to further upgrade our roads and improve maintenance capabilities; to improve our existing ports and establish new dry ports; to build a railway system; and to modernize our airports.

Secondly, Afghanistan has concluded a significant number of bilateral and trilateral agreements with most of our neighbours since 2002. Afghanistan has joined most major regional organizations and will continue to work towards meeting the objectives of the Almaty Programme of Action on regional cooperation. Unfortunately, only a few of those treaties have been implemented, owing to lack of political confidence among countries in the region or lack of capacity and infrastructure. In short, we have yet to reap the benefit of those agreements.

To move forward, Afghanistan recommends renewed attention to international and regional partnerships. The Almaty Programme of Action can be implemented only through those partnerships. That spirit is clearly highlighted in the Almaty Declaration. The Almaty Programme of Action calls on bilateral and multilateral donors alike to increase financial and technical assistance to landlocked developing countries, particularly those emerging from conflicts. It also contains comprehensive directions for donors and the international community to assist landlocked and transit countries. Moreover, the Programme encourages developing and developed countries to enhance cooperation on the basis of mutual interest. Any improvement in trade with Afghanistan promises great benefits to partnering countries as well.

Regional economic cooperation is becoming an integral part of the globalization strategies of almost all neighbouring countries of Afghanistan. As a result, Afghanistan now has a unique opportunity to realize its potential as a land bridge between Central Asia, South Asia and the West Asian region. We are aware of our responsibilities to work with our neighbours towards policies and institutional mechanisms to translate that potential into concrete regional projects, but we would like to encourage others to work with us at a similar pace and in the same spirit.

My delegation carefully reviewed the draft outcome document of the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action (A/63/L.3), which contains important recommendations and strongly appeals to the international community and donors to increase their level of support, particularly official development assistance, to the landlocked and transit developing countries. It encourages the landlocked and developing transit countries to take a proactive approach towards bilateral and multilateral cooperation. If the recommendations remain only words on paper, we may not witness a qualitative change; but if undertaken in an honest, serious, effective and constructive manner, those recommendations can improve the nature of trade and transit and fully realize the objectives of the Almaty Programme of Action.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Hjalmar Hannesson, chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Iceland.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): We welcome the efforts made by the Secretary-General to ensure effective preparation for the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action, and thank him for his comprehensive report (A/63/165) on the implementation of the Programme. I would also like

thank Ambassador Takasu, Permanent Representative of Japan, for his excellent work in facilitating the consultations on the declaration (A/63/L.3) to be adopted at the end of this meeting.

There have been a number of positive developments in the landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) in recent years, and fairly consistent economic growth. However, the report of the Secretary-General shows that considerable efforts are needed in the nearest future to improve the competitiveness of the LLDCs in order to strengthen their participation in the global economy. We are fully committed to the implementation of the five priorities of the Almaty Programme of Action. We recognize that the specific situations of those countries, with their lack of access to the sea and distances from world markets, make eradication of poverty even more challenging. Last year, 41 per cent of our bilateral development assistance was directed to LLDCs in Africa and another 30 per cent to important transit developing countries in Africa. We are concerned that the LLDCs continue to build an unsuitable level of external debt. Iceland is a supporter and financier of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative, as well as the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative, both of which have been important for many of the LLDCs.

More is needed on financing for development. The forthcoming meeting in Doha on financing for development will test the resolve of the international community, and Iceland, for its part, aims to be among the top official development assistance contributors, having already doubled its budget for development cooperation in the past four years. We will continue to direct most of our bilateral development assistance to the LDCs in Africa, many of which are either landlocked or important transit countries.

Women play a fundamental role in development, and experience has shown that support for the education, health and economic activities of women has a multiplier effect for their communities. For that reason, we have increasingly directed our development cooperation towards gender specific projects. That has been done through our bilateral programmes in the partner countries and through support to the work of the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Development Fund for Women.

Aid for trade, which Iceland supports, is an important initiative that can reduce the adverse effect of the LLDC's geographic location and should be part of a broader development policy for the LLDCs. We will continue to advocate the increased liberalization of international trade. The setback of the Doha Development Round could slow down the integration of the LLDCs into the world economy. That makes it even more urgent than ever that we facilitate market access for goods originating in those countries and ensure, at all levels, a broad range of trade facilitation measures. It is our duty to do what we can to offset the high transit and transport costs facing businesses in the LLDCs.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Don Pramudwinai, chairman of the delegation of the Kingdom of Thailand.

Mr. Pramudwinai (Thailand): This year marks two important midpoints, one relates to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the other to the Almaty Programme of Action. Last week, during the general debate and during the high-level meeting on the MDGs, one of the issues often mentioned was poverty eradication. That issue is clearly very important and the United Nations dedicated one round-table meeting on that particular issue during the high-level meeting on the MDGs.

A number of perspectives to overcome poverty and hunger were raised during such meetings and one among many is opportunity, that is, the opportunity to connect to the world and the opportunity to play a role in the global community. It is clear that being provided with opportunity would help developing countries that are not yet on track to achieve the MDGs to be able to eradicate poverty, ensure better livelihoods and thus achieve the MDGs by the target year of 2015. In that regard, the global partnership for development has been highlighted as a mechanism to provide such opportunity.

Besides Africa, whose development needs were at the centre of the discussions over the past few weeks, there are also the special needs of the landlocked developing countries, which deserve unabated attention from the international community to ensure the realization of their opportunity and potential. As a neighbour of a landlocked developing country, we are well aware of the role that a transit country should play. Thus, we appreciate the efforts made by the Secretary-General to organize this high-level meeting

to review the progress at the midpoint of the Almaty Programme of Action, which, indeed, highlights the key role of partnership between landlocked and transit developing countries and other partners in creating opportunity and access to global markets and connectivity.

Thailand believes that opportunity is important for ensuring development and prosperity. Thus, Thailand has extended cooperation on transport linkages to its neighbouring countries through regional, subregional and bilateral cooperation, in line with the priorities set out in the Almaty Programme of Action.

To facilitate transit transport and eliminate non-physical barriers we have provided special privileges to neighbouring countries by exempting customs on commercial goods that are transited through Thailand. Under the umbrella of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), member States have also worked on a number of agreements on transportation and communication, for example, the Framework Agreement on the Facilitation of Goods in Transit, signed in 1998, and the Framework Agreement on Multimodal Transport in 2005.

On infrastructure, Thailand has placed great importance on the construction of transport links within the region under several regional and subregional cooperation agreements. The network of transportation linkages will facilitate further regional integration in economic and social areas, which will ultimately nurture the greater sense of community among countries. At present, the Asian Highway Network has made great progress with the development of the East-West, North-South and Southern Economic Corridors under the Greater Mekong Subregion framework. Once realized, the Singapore-Kunming Rail Link under the ASEAN Mekong Basin Development Cooperation will link ASEAN members with China. Under the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, a study on the development of transport infrastructure and logistics between South and Southeast Asia was conducted by the Asian Development Bank to facilitate trade and transport across the Bay of Bengal.

During the third Greater Mekong Subregion Summit in Laos, the Thai Prime Minister proposed initiatives for tourism loops in order to boost economic activity through tourism by connecting historical and cultural heritage sites in the cities along the existing corridors in the Mekong subregion. This route can complement existing tourist destinations in the ASEAN region and those of the Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand Growth Triangle.

As the economic corridors under the Greater Mekong Subregion are due for completion in 2015, Thailand is of the view that it would be useful for the relevant member countries of subregional cooperation frameworks, such as the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy, Greater Mekong Subregion, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation and Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand Growth Triangle, together with their development partners, to consider cooperation to identify and expedite missing-link projects that would complete or significantly enhance transportation networks, not only within the Greater Mekong Subregion but beyond, including South Asia and the whole of continental Southeast Asia.

On the bilateral basis, Thailand has been providing financial assistance to the Lao People's Democratic Republic, our landlocked neighbour, as well as to Cambodia and Myanmar in projects that will help strengthen transport connectivity. However, I will confine myself in the role of Thailand as a transit country. Thailand has provided financial assistance, both grants and soft loans, to Laos for the construction of transport infrastructure. On road developments, our assistance has been provided for building a road linking Huay Sai-Loung Num Tha in Laos, which is a part of route No. 3 of the North-South Economic Corridor under the Great Mekong Subregion framework. Currently, we are considering assistance to rehabilitate route No. 11 in Vientiane. On the development of Mekong bridges, Thailand worked with Laos in utilizing the loan from the Japan Bank for International Cooperation to construct the second Mekong bridge. Thailand has also provided financial assistance to build the third Mekong bridge and is cooperating with China to build the fourth Mekong bridge.

Apart from the progress made in road and bridge development, Thailand continues to play an active role in strengthening other modes of connectivity with Laos. We contributed financial resources and expertise to support the development of a rail link from Nong Kai to Tha Na Lang, which was completed in April

2007. Moreover, we have offered a soft loan for the project to improve the Pakse airport. In addition, both sides are working on an assessment on the rehabilitation of Savannakhet airport, which is a part of the Asian Development Bank's East-West Economic Corridors project under the Greater Mekong Subregion Framework.

Providing opportunity in term of linkages will create direct people-to-people contacts, which would help people to have better accesses in the economic and social spheres and improve their livelihoods as a whole. In addition, those linkages could have a role in bridging the development gap through accessibility to global markets. That would enable landlocked developing countries to gain more economic benefits from globalization, reduce poverty and achieve the MDGs.

On our part, Thailand will continue to actively support the development of transport links to improve the living standards of the people in the Mekong subregion. In the Asia-Pacific region, Thailand appreciates the efforts by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, which is the regional arm of the Organization, in connecting our members in the region and creating opportunities to make it possible to have greater access to markets.

However, there is more to be done. Thailand also wishes to urge other development partners to participate in transport connectivity development, in terms of both technical and financial assistance relating to infrastructure development. Several programmes and projects still need more funding support. Moreover, there are imperative needs to strengthen administration, management and the sustainable use of infrastructure while taking into account cost reductions, operation and maintenance, safety, the mitigation of social and environmental impacts and the fair distribution of benefits to the people.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Steve Dick Tennyson Matenje, chairman of the delegation of Malawi.

Mr. Matenje (Malawi): Let me begin by congratulating the President for convening this important meeting on the midterm review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/63/165) on the progress made, the lessons learned and the constraints encountered in the implementation of the Programme of Action. Allow me also to thank Ambassador Yukio Takasu of Japan for his facilitation in the drafting of the outcome document for this meeting, as well as the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for the role it continues to play in the implementation of the Programme of Action.

Malawi is both landlocked and least developed. Clearly, like other countries in a similar situation, it faces unique and daunting challenges. Those include rising oil costs, lack of direct access to the sea and remoteness from major international markets, all of which result in prohibitive transport costs and formidable obstacles to Malawi's import and export trade. Unless those challenges are addressed urgently, landlocked developing countries, including Malawi, will remain uncompetitive in the global economy and the development gap between them and the rest of the world will continue to widen, resulting in their perpetual dependence on foreign aid.

As Malawi's President Dr. Bingu Wa Mutharika often says, a good friend is the one you walk with and not the one you carry on your shoulders — because when you trip, you both fall. Accordingly, we urge our development partners, as good friends, to walk with us and not to carry us on their shoulders on our journey to economic prosperity and independence. We ask them to do so by assisting us to remove obstacles to our import and export trade so that we can create the needed wealth we so much need to reduce poverty in our country.

It was precisely for that reason that, in 2003, the United Nations adopted the Almaty Programme of Action as a reflection of the commitment of the international community to address the special needs and problems of landlocked developing countries, as called for in the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The objective of the Programme of Action was to establish a new global framework for transit transport cooperation for landlocked developing countries. Among other things, the Programme of Action aims at securing access by landlocked developing countries to and from the sea by all means and at reducing costs associated with their import and export trade. A critical aspect in achieving those

objectives is the provision of transport infrastructure to both landlocked and transit developing countries.

In that regard, Malawi's growth and development strategy identifies transport infrastructure development as one of the Government's six key priority areas for achieving economic growth in the medium term. Accordingly, the Government of Malawi is vigorously pursuing a multimodal inland transport system to improve road, rail, air and inland water transportation, with a view to facilitating internal trade as well as import and export trade.

With regard to inland water transportation, the Governments of Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia have concluded a memorandum of understanding to develop and implement a waterway project known as the Shire-Zambezi Waterway Project, which aims at connecting Malawi, Zambia and the hinterland of Mozambique to the sea through the Shire River in southern Malawi and Mozambique and the Zambezi River in Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The Shire-Zambezi waterway was used as a transport waterway by British explorers and missionaries going to Malawi a century and a half ago. As recently as the 1970s, it was used for transporting molasses from Malawi to the port of Chinde, in Mozambique. The idea is to reopen the waterway in order to reduce substantially import and export transport costs and thereby stimulate economic development in the three countries and beyond. The waterway is intended to supplement existing transport corridors to the ports of Nacala and Beira, in Mozambique, and the port of Dar-es-Salaam, in Tanzania.

The waterway project is in line with the Almaty Programme of Action, as well as the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, both of which aim to address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and least developed countries such as Malawi. It is also in line with the objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which recognizes infrastructure development as one of the major pillars for economic growth and poverty reduction in Africa and for reducing Africa's economic marginalization. Furthermore, in addition to NEPAD, the Southern African Development Community and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa support the Shire-Zambezi Waterway Project as a priority programme that needs to be integrated into the surface transport networks in the subregion and the maritime regime of the Indian Ocean. Accordingly, we urge the international community to support the Shire-Zambezi waterway initiative.

As we take stock of the past five years, we urge the United Nations to consider the project as an example of the efforts being made to implement the Almaty Programme of Action and to assist in the mobilization of financing for its implementation. Indeed, while Malawi recognizes that national Governments have the primary responsibility for their countries' economic and social development, we also believe that the international community must ensure the success of excellent initiatives such as the Shire-Zambezi Waterway Project. That project will boost the economic advancement of millions of people in our subregion, the majority of whom are women, who depend wholly on agriculture for their survival.

While Malawi agrees that tangible progress has been made globally in the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, landlocked developing countries continue to faces challenges. More needs to be done, not only to provide transport infrastructure but also to help to improve transport networks in landlocked developing countries. Accordingly, we support the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report contained in document A/63/165. Among other things, the report calls on the international community to provide greater market access for goods originating in landlocked developing countries so as to mitigate the high trade transaction costs stemming from their geographical disadvantages, and to increase technical assistance to landlocked developing countries to ensure their effective participation in the World Trade Organization's trade negotiations. In that regard, we wish to urge the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to take the lead in ensuring the implementation of the Secretary-General's recommendations.

Before I conclude, let me put on record Malawi's appreciation for the cooperation it receives from Tanzania, Mozambique and South Africa in placing their seaports at the disposal of Malawi. Malawi is also grateful to Zambia and Zimbabwe, themselves landlocked developing countries, for facilitating the passage of Malawi's imports and exports through their

territories. That cooperation is a manifestation of the partnerships envisaged by the Almaty Programme of Action. It must not only be encouraged but also supported technically and financially by the international community.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Michel Kafando, chair of the delegation of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): I should like to express my delegation's satisfaction at seeing you, Sir, presiding over this high-level meeting on the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action. My delegation would also like to thank the Secretary-General for the excellent organization of this debate and the interest he has shown in the concerns of landlocked developing countries. My delegation also welcomes the efforts of Mr. Cheikh Diarra, High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. We would also like to associate ourselves with the statement to be delivered by the representative of Mali on behalf of landlocked developing countries, and the statement delivered at the 18th meeting by the Chairman of the Group of 77.

The year 2008 has produced unprecedented socio-economic crises, in particular as regards oil prices, the spike in the price of food products, the rise in the cost of energy resources and the disastrous effects of natural catastrophes. They have shaken the world economy, but they have a more serious impact on landlocked developing countries. The total or partial deterioration of transport infrastructure and the geographical distance from the sea of landlocked development countries are responsible for serious disruptions in our trade, inter alia, as a result of the long time required to transport goods and, above all, the prohibitive cost of the transport itself.

The inherent problems of landlocked developing countries are major concerns of the Almaty Programme of Action. I believe that this meeting is an opportunity for the international community to carry out a midterm review of the implementation of the Programme of Action. We are pleased that the review has benefited from the conclusions of the thematic ministerial meetings held in June 2007 at Ouagadougou, on transit transport infrastructure development, and in August 2007 at Ulaanbaatar, on international trade and trade facilitation. Those two preparatory meetings have enabled us to evaluate the implementation of the Programme's crucial elements, identify the best steps to address the consequences of the physical isolation of landlocked countries and determine how to improve the competitiveness of their economies.

My delegation is pleased with the relevance of the theme of this meeting, which asks the entire international community to consider its role in the establishment of transit transport systems in order to increase opportunities for trade between countries in the interior and the rest of the world.

Infrastructure funding is of crucial importance for the success of the Almaty Programme of Action. Mobilizing investment in transport and transit requires the involvement of the private sector and bilateral and multilateral financial partners. A genuine national, subregional, regional and international partnership based on the specific needs of landlocked countries should bring us all together through predictable and sizeable funding mechanisms to build and rehabilitate transport and transit infrastructure and to strengthen international frameworks for the promotion of trade.

My delegation calls on developed countries, especially the members of the Group of Eight, to become genuinely involved in the preparatory process for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development, which is scheduled to be held at Doha from 29 November to 2 December 2008, in order to carry out an objective review of the commitments entered into at Monterrey in 2002.

Half the landlocked developing countries are in Africa, where the level of development of the road network is the worst in the world — twice as bad as in Latin America and three times as in Asia. Given that challenge, African countries have made an absolute priority of building road, railway and airport infrastructure. The recent thematic ministerial meeting at Ouagadougou supported and encouraged Africa's infrastructure development strategy and launched an urgent appeal to public and private investors alike to fund infrastructure and facilitate trade.

Trade continues to be among the most important engines of development in developing countries, especially in landlocked countries. My delegation is concerned about the recent failures in multilateral trade negotiations at the World Trade Organization. The lack of consensus at that level is a clear illustration of the marginalization of poor developing countries in

international trade. Burkina Faso calls for a resumption of those negotiations in a spirit of consensus and international solidarity to establish fair rules and conditions that favour equitable and profitable trade for all.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Aldo Mantovani, the representative of Italy.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): Allow me to begin by endorsing the statement delivered by the representative of France at the 18th meeting in his country's capacity as presidency of the European Union.

Italy wishes to thank landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries for preparing this midterm review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, at both the national and regional levels. We also join other delegations in expressing our appreciation to Ambassador Takasu, for successfully facilitating the negotiations on the draft final document, and Mr. Cheikh Sidi Diarra, Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser to the Secretary-General, for the support his Office provided to the entire preparation process of the midterm review.

When the Italian Parliament revised the legal basis for our development cooperation in 1989, it listed among its priorities the consolidation of local development processes in the world's poorest countries and fostering their economic, social and cultural growth. For 20 years, that goal has remained at the heart of our activities. That is why Italy welcomed and continues to endorse the philosophy that led to the adoption of the Almaty Programme of Action.

Between 2003 and 2008 Italy's overall development aid in favour of landlocked developing countries increased by about 70 per cent, for a total of approximately $250 million. Last year, we also contributed $50,000 to the organization of the two preparatory meetings in Ulaanbaatar and Ouagadougou.

The obstacles that Governments of landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries must overcome are related not so much to their geographical location as to complex regulatory procedures, lack of cooperation in tackling bureaucratic delays and an underdeveloped logistics sector. Significant efforts have been made in the past five years, thanks to the Almaty framework, but we still have a long road ahead of us.

Regional and subregional cooperation is also an important means of implementing the Almaty Programme, and the relevant regional and subregional organizations, especially those conducting operational activities on the ground, are important stakeholders. Their continued interest and commitment is essential to achieving concrete progress in the implementation of the five priorities laid down at Almaty.

Italy remains as ready as ever to facilitate that process. We reaffirm our commitment to improving the performance of our bilateral assistance in that sector. At the same time, we are consistently engaged in improving the impact of those activities and in increasing funding for them.

Allow me to mention two major actions by Italy to implement the Almaty goals. First, we have made a total contribution of approximately €100 million, equivalent to $140 million, to the Government of Afghanistan for the rehabilitation and the partial reconstruction of the Kabul-Bamyan highway. That initiative seeks to substantially improve the connection between two major cities, reducing transit costs and times both within Afghanistan and between Afghanistan and neighbouring countries. The project will also help to improve the operational capability of local institutions in charge of monitoring the quality of the extra-urban transportation system.

The second action is the rehabilitation of the Toledo-Ancaravi section of the Oruro-Pisiga highway in Bolivia, which Italy financed through a $25 million soft loan. That project constitutes a major expansion of Bolivia's road infrastructure and will bring much-needed economic progress to one of the poorest and most sparsely populated areas of the country.

Italy is willing to encourage its multilateral partners to step up their involvement in this area. International financial institutions in particular have a real comparative advantage to provide landlocked developing countries with the financial assistance needed to support their costly investments in infrastructure development and maintenance.

The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals requires resource mobilization and exchanges of experiences among all partners, at both the institutional and private levels. Italy is convinced that the

contribution of the private sector is crucial to the development of infrastructure and productive capacity. It must be increased through the creation of public-private partnerships.

The incoming Italian presidency of the Group of 8 will pay great attention to information and communication technology for development. The development of transit transport infrastructure is not limited to the construction and maintenance of physical infrastructure such as roads, railways, airports, ports, pipelines and so on. Instead, physical infrastructure needs to be complemented by an efficient and modern storage and transport organization, logistics management systems and integrated information and communication networks.

Bridging the digital divide, promoting good governance, exchanging experiences and best practices and proper training and education in landlocked and transit developing countries are consistent with priority 1 of the Almaty Programme of Action. In that regard, Italy will promote projects fostering the dissemination of e-government instruments aimed at improving and speeding up complicated bureaucratic procedures — for instance, in the field of customs and logistics.

Italy is keen to discuss with partners the further development of those initiatives and the development of strategies for their implementation that involve the private sector and all major stakeholders.

Italy is ready to do its part to help landlocked and transit developing countries. At the same time, we expect developing countries to continue to assume ownership and to design appropriate national policies in the framework of agreed regional initiatives. We are confident that, together, we will succeed.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Eshagh Al Habib, the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the very outset, please allow me to congratulate the President for convening such a timely meeting. I am confident that under his able leadership, the high-level plenary meeting devoted to the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action will achieve a fruitful outcome. I should also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his introductory remarks at the 17th meeting. Our thanks and appreciation also go to the Secretariat for its preparation and provision of a document for this meeting.

Transit and transport issues are of great importance, especially in today's globalized world. It is believed that transit transport development equals economic growth, leading to poverty alleviation, which is the first priority of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In that regard, the establishment of effective and efficient transit systems is the top priority of both landlocked and transit developing countries, bearing in mind that the primary responsibility for establishing effective transit systems rests with landlocked and transit developing countries seeking to create conditions in which resources can be generated, attracted and effectively mobilized to address their development challenges. But their endeavours and cooperation also need to be supported by development partners and international and regional organizations in a spirit of shared responsibility.

Furthermore, strengthening the legal framework governing transit transport operations — including through the full and effective implementation of bilateral, subregional and regional agreements — prepared effective plans to achieve our goals and expedite the process. The Almaty Programme of Action therefore constitutes a fundamental framework for genuine partnership between landlocked and transit developing countries and their development partners at the national, bilateral, subregional, regional and global levels.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has undertaken many initiatives, especially in following up and speeding up the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action to facilitate transit transport, in line with promoting lessons learned from existing regional infrastructure initiatives to encourage integrated cross-border infrastructure investment. This year, Iran and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific have jointly organized two workshops focused on the facilitation of rail and road transit transport. Iran is also on the verge of accession to the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia, which aims to promote and facilitate transit transport in order to effectively implement trade facilitation measures, including the implementation of regional customs transit schemes.

With regard to successfully implementing an automated system for customs data, Iran is now making

efforts to continue to implement such a system in order to ease customs formalities. We are also considering the possibility of negotiating and granting duty-free zones and maritime ports.

In 2008 at Tehran, Iran also held an international travel and transit and east-west corridor seminar, at which it introduced to the world the Chabahar free trade zone and east-west corridor.

As one of the most important transit developing countries, due to its specific geographical position, the Islamic Republic of Iran is host to very important multimodal transportation routes whose development and maintenance pose great challenges. If those concerns and challenges are not addressed, they may hamper cooperation among transit developing countries and landlocked developing countries. Moreover, the development and maintenance of infrastructure require a greater share of the investment and financial assistance from donors, international financial institutions and development assistance agencies.

I recognize, in conclusion, that addressing the transit transport challenges of developing countries requires a holistic approach, and I invite all of the relevant organizations of the United Nations system — including the regional commissions, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development — and other international and regional organizations to further integrate the Almaty Programme of Action into their relevant programmes of work, taking into account this midterm review. I encourage them, within their respective mandates, to continue their support to the landlocked and transit developing countries, inter alia, through well-coordinated and coherent technical assistance programmes in transit transport and trade facilitation.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Viktor I. Zagrekov of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Zagrekov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Globalization is having an ever-greater impact on all aspects of world society. However, the current uneven distribution of its benefits brings with it the risk of social and economic upheavals and the division of the world economy into areas of growth and areas of stagnation. We know that developing and landlocked countries are especially vulnerable in such a situation.

In that regard, Russia has taken active steps to implement the Almaty Programme of Action, which was adopted five years ago and focuses on implementing a complex set of measures to develop transit shipments. We also fully endorse the development of a scheme for a Eurasian transport system on the basis of the Almaty Programme of Action. We believe that that will provide a solid platform for dealing with key transport issues in the coming decade.

In accordance with the Almaty Programme of Action, the steps taken by the Russian Federation in recent years have focused on improving the national transport policy aimed at developing transit shipments, strengthening transport infrastructure of international importance and activating cooperation with business groups through the execution of various projects involving, inter alia, State-private partnerships.

Our key guideline in this effort has been the Federal Programme on the development of the transport system of the Russian Federation and its subprogramme on developing the export of transport services, which seeks to establish an effective transport infrastructure that would increase the competitiveness of the Russian transport system and realize the country's transport potential.

The Programme includes measures to prepare and implement large complex investment projects aimed at developing the main freight and passenger transport corridors with a view to improving the quality of transport services, speeding up deliveries and improving the management of transport. The main job we face is to enable the containerization of freight and attract transit flows to international transport corridors that pass through the Russian Federation.

Russia's geographical situation plays an important role in determining our development strategy and policies. Russia occupies the central portion of the Eurasian Continent and it is our destiny to act as a geopolitical bridge between Eastern and Western countries. In that connection we participate actively in the international dialogue on transport issues as they are being negotiated both in Europe and in Asia.

We support implementation of the comprehensive Asian Land Transport Infrastructure Development Project of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), which includes development of the Asian highway network and the

trans-Asian railway system. The Russian Federation is a party to the Intergovernmental Agreements worked out by ESCAP on the Asian road and railway networks, and we are convinced that their implementation will lead to significant benefits for developing and landlocked countries as well as for developing transit States.

One important element of transport policy that will certainly have a significant effect on landlocked transit countries in Central Asia is the adoption in January 2008 of the scheme for a single transport space within the Eurasian Economic Community. The scheme, in whose preparation Russia played an active role, calls for the development of the overall transport capacities of all member States, the elimination of barriers hampering international shipments, joint expansion of the access of the carriers of member States to international transport markets and the development of transport infrastructure. We have also undertaken regular demonstration runs of container trains linking Europe and Asia. Starting in 2002, such demonstration runs have been carried out on various routes from eastern ports of Russia, Mongolia, China, Central Asian countries and Kazakhstan to the Russian borders with countries of Eastern and Northern Europe. The purpose of those runs has been not only to demonstrate the advantages of the land route over the sea route but also to find bottlenecks so that they can be eliminated.

We should also mention a joint ESCAP-Economic Commission for Europe project to develop Eurasian transport links, which seeks to identify the most important railway, automobile and internal watercourse routes linking the countries of Asia and Europe. The project will determine priority means of improving those routes, including measures to eliminate gaps and bottlenecks, simplify border formalities, eliminate barriers and develop ways to ensure uninterrupted use of those routes for freight transport between Europe and Asia.

Significant work has been devoted to the new Eurasian road transport initiative, a project being carried out by the International Road Transport Union aimed at providing for regular road shipment between Asia and Europe.

In conclusion, I want to say that we are very happy with the work carried out by countries and international organizations, especially United Nations agencies, in the framework of the Almaty Programme of Action. We wish again to reconfirm Russia's commitment to the main goal of that programme, namely, meeting the needs of landlocked countries through the creation of global frameworks for action to establish effective transit shipment systems.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Oumar Daou, chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Mali.

Mr. Daou (Mali) (*spoke in French*): I wish at the outset to welcome the convening of this important meeting. I should like to share the experience of my own country, Mali, within the framework of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.

Mali, with seven land borders, is a perfect example of a landlocked developing country (LLDC). Our remoteness from the sea is a serious obstacle to the provision of necessary supplies and creates transportation costs that diminish the value and thus the competitiveness of our export products. Our geographical location also explains the vulnerability of Mali's economy, especially during this time of crisis.

With reference to the report of the Secretary-General of 23 July 2008 (A/63/165), I wish to focus on Mali's activities in implementing some of the priorities mentioned in the report. I turn first to fundamental issues linked to transit policy; I wish to note that Mali has taken a number of substantial measures, including in improving the effectiveness of transit transport operations and to reduce transport costs by enhancing the storage capacity of warehouses at transit points.

A number of measures have been taken including the establishment of the protocol agreement for the maritime, road and railroad transport and transit of Malian merchandise. Mali has also organized the private sector into federations including the establishment of the Mali Shippers Council and the Malian Road Transport Council.

Turning to the important area of the development and maintenance of transport and transit infrastructure, Mali has adopted a policy of promoting private investment in the areas of equipment and transport and storage facilities. We have carried out transport infrastructure work to improve access to all transport and transit ports. We have also upgraded our rail and road transport infrastructure. In order to facilitate trade, the self-assessment methodology established by

the World Bank and the agencies of the United Nations system is being used.

Overall, although relevant actions have been undertaken, transit transport is still coming up against certain hurdles, including the many control points on inter-State routes and numerous tariff and non-tariff barriers. These considerably impede trade and raise overhead costs for our goods.

Another problem is the lack or insufficiency of transit transport infrastructure, which has obliged us to set up adjacent or joint inspection posts at the borders. Information systems are poorly adapted to the merchandise, training for those working in the sector is inadequate, and the storage capacity of Malian warehouses at transit ports is low.

Faced with these numerous challenges and hurdles on the path of development, Mali has undertaken, in the context of its statement of overall transport policy, a number of actions aimed at improving the transport sector, through its Transport Sector Project, including the following.

Firstly, we have enhanced performance and management capacities of the sector by reorganizing and building local capacity, through the aforementioned establishment of the Malian Shippers Council and the Malian Road Transport Council.

Secondly, we have restructured transport companies and have reviewed the institutional and regulatory framework in order to further involve the private sector. Finally, we have upgraded and maintained our priority transport infrastructure through establishment of the National Transport Facilitation Committee, the Road Safety Committee and the Agency for Road Traffic Safety. Additionally, we have declared a National Road Safety Week and have put in place the Inter-State Road Transit programme.

Mali remains convinced that the development of landlocked developing countries must be based on cooperation. This is why Mali supports the major programmes for developing transport within the framework of the West African Economic Monetary and Economic Union and the Economic Community of West African States. The adoption of a programme for landlocked countries is an opportunity we must seize in order to work with our development partners to find the financing needed to build and improve the infrastructure necessary for the development of our country.

In that connection, I would like to recall the commitment of my country to be involved in activities aimed at the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. This commitment is demonstrated by our active presence in relevant forums and by the implementation at the national level of all of the Programme's recommendations. This is why the President of the Republic of Mali through his special envoy, the Minister of Equipment and Transport, has conveyed his warm greetings to this Assembly.

Before concluding, I would also like to convey to the entire United Nations family our sincere greetings and thanks. I would be remiss if I did not also greet and thank the High Representative for the LDCs, LLDCs and Small Island Developing States for his remarkable work in coordinating all of these activities within the framework of the current review.

I would also like to thank Mr. Habib Ouane, Director of the Division for Africa, LDCs and Special Programmes of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, for his pertinent analysis and suggestions which will be extremely useful for the realization of the second phase of the Almaty Programme of Action.

Finally, I wish to sincerely thank Japan for the invaluable role it has played in the negotiations that today have enabled us to make progress in the implementation of the Programme.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Maged Abdelaziz, chairman of the delegation of Egypt.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): At the outset, I would like to thank you the President of the General Assembly for convening this important and timely meeting to review the needs and challenges of landlocked countries and to express our appreciation to Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra, Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Africa and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States, and to his skilled team for the excellent work they are doing and for their efforts in making this review meeting a success.

Egypt associates itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The Almaty Programme of Action represents a significant landmark in the recognition of the special needs and problems of LLDCs. The midterm review provides an opportunity to assess the progress made so far in the implementation of the specific actions according to the five priorities agreed upon in the Almaty Programme of Action.

In this context, I would like to highlight some points aimed at enhancing the ability of the landlocked developing countries to become effective partners in international development activities. Special attention should be given to the needs of landlocked developing countries in the Doha trade negotiations to enhance their role in international trade system and to push forward their development efforts. There is also a need to attract private investment, including foreign direct investment. In that regard, private sector participation, through co-financing, can play a catalytic role.

Egypt welcomes the proposal by His Excellency the President of Mongolia to set up in Ulaanbaatar an international think tank to enhance the analytical capability of landlocked developing countries needed to maximize the efficiency of our coordinated efforts for the effective implementation of internationally agreed provisions, particularly the Almaty Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals. In this regard, we urge international organizations and donor countries to assist in making that initiative a reality.

Efforts to facilitate the transfer of technologies related to transit transport systems, including information and communication technology, are also needed by landlocked developing countries. We also encourage the strengthening of South-South cooperation and trilateral cooperation with the involvement of donors, as well as cooperation among subregional and regional organizations in support of landlocked and transit developing countries towards the full and effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action.

As the current global crises — food, energy, climate and finance, and maybe others — will compound the challenges to the development objectives of LLDCs and will constrain national efforts to advance implementation of the Programme, a robust and proactive initiative, including a doubling of efforts and resources on the part of all development partners in support of LLDCs will be required.

Progressive measures are also needed to address the long-standing barriers to development, such as international trade barriers, the lack of resources for investing in infrastructure and weak international support measures. We encourage developed countries to deliver on their commitments to provide 0.15 per cent to 0.20 per cent of their gross national income to official development assistance in order to maintain sufficient levels of assistance to the LLDCs.

Egypt has always been keen to strengthen its relations with all developing countries and to establish relations on the basis of mutual respect, mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence. In that context, Egypt has established two funds as part of Egypt's foreign policy mechanism for supporting and strengthening South-South cooperation within its existing resources. The funds are the Egyptian Fund for Technical Cooperation with Africa, which provides assistance for African countries, and the Egyptian Fund for Technical Cooperation with the Commonwealth of Independent States, which has been modified to include other developing countries, in particular LLDCs. We are in the process of expanding the funds' activities within those countries.

Egypt accords great attention to the role of the funds, providing training courses and expertise commensurate with the needs of those countries and providing assistance in building capacity and providing better services in the implementation of their national development strategies. Trilateral cooperation is an integral part of the funds' activities, together with cooperation with various United Nations bodies and donor countries aimed at enhancing the resources available for developing countries and enabling them to benefit from Egyptian expertise in various areas. The funds also provide humanitarian assistance in response to appeals from United Nations bodies.

Several Egyptian companies have taken a leading role in directing investments to the infrastructure sector, particularly telecommunications and construction, in landlocked developing countries, and we will enhance that role within the public-private partnership in the Egyptian system.

Finally, Egypt welcomes the draft declaration (A/63/L.3) resulting from the midterm review and

would like to thank Ambassador Takasu of Japan for his efforts in that regard. We remain committed to continuing to strengthen and safeguard the interests of the developing world — in particular, the interests of landlocked developing countries, least developed countries, small island developing States and Africa — in view of the mounting challenges facing developing countries. Those challenges require unity and solidarity through the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Armen Martirosyan, chairman of the delegation of Armenia.

Mr. Martirosyan (Armenia): On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, I wish to express our sincere appreciation to the organizers of this plenary meeting devoted to the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action. I would like to acknowledge the efforts of Ambassador Takasu, Permanent Representative of Japan, in facilitating the negotiations on the draft outcome document (A/63/L.3), which concluded last month.

Any programme is only as good as its realization, and the Almaty Programme of Action is no exception. I should like to share with the Assembly Armenia's views on some of the issues related to the Programme of Action. It is our strong belief that the international community should adopt effective measures to eliminate the use of unilateral coercive economic measures, particularly against landlocked developing countries. Such actions contradict the recognized principles of international law and, in addition to undermining the multilateral trading system, have a negative impact on international and regional economic cooperation. The interests and concerns of landlocked countries should be taken fully into account while establishing new transit transport systems, as stipulated in paragraph 8 of the Almaty Programme of Action. The formulation and implementation of any divisive initiative would run counter to the Almaty Programme of Action and would only add to the tension in volatile regions such as the South Caucasus.

Regional and subregional cooperation play an important role in successfully addressing the specific problems of transit transportation. In that context, as stated in the Almaty Programme of Action,

> "support from all existing sources, where requested, for mechanisms of regional and subregional dialogue and regional integration among landlocked and transit countries, is important". (*A/CONF.202/3, annex I, para. 9*)

We also believe that the landlocked countries should be assisted in the area of trade facilitation and that relevant instruments should be adopted within the framework of the World Trade Organization.

In order to facilitate the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, we would like to make a number of proposals that, we believe, would ensure the effectiveness of the Programme. We deem it necessary to take the following actions.

First, we should promote the use and further development of existing transport infrastructures in the landlocked developing countries, ensuring their sustainable integration into international transport corridors and related regional developments, which in turn would ensure access to the high seas. Secondly, we should thoroughly consider the interests of the landlocked countries when formulating development plans for sea motorways and ports. Thirdly, we should create favourable conditions for the presence of landlocked developing countries with regard to ports, maritime infrastructures and maritime transport vehicles. With a view to the implementation of those proposals, the international financial institutions should be urged to provide grants and long-term loans under favourable conditions to those interested in promoting the attainment of those objectives.

The Almaty Programme of Action has demonstrated its timeliness and comprehensiveness. We believe that, through joint effort, we will produce new tangible results to be assessed at the next midterm review.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with General Assembly resolution 62/76 of 6 December 2007, I now call on the observer for the Eurasian Development Bank.

Mr. Finogenov (Eurasian Development Bank) (*spoke in Russian*): The Eurasian Development Bank is the youngest in the family of international development banks. The Bank, established in 2006 under an initiative of the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan, is an international financing institution that promotes the market economies of its members. The Bank also promotes the economic development of its members and strengthening their trade and economic links through investment activities. The Eurasian

Development Bank is open to new members. We expect that Belarus, Armenia and Tajikistan will join us by the end of the year, and we hope to see our membership continue to increase.

From the outset we have placed priority in our investment activities on innovation in transport, infrastructure, energy, high technology and other innovative fields. The Almaty Programme of Action pays particular attention to these fields, and its aim is to help landlocked countries, which, in our case, are Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The Bank is currently considering projects worth over $5 billion and is contributing more than $2 billion of their total cost. In the transport infrastructure field, we are considering a project to build a waterway connecting the Caspian Sea to the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea, based on initiatives put forward by the Russian and Kazakh Presidents. The Bank can also contribute to a transport corridor between Western Europe and western China and between the North and South.

We are paying specific attention to projects linked to the use of waterways in Central Asia and to the exploitation of their hydroelectric potential. The Eurasian Development Bank acknowledges the importance of hydroelectric resources and is now developing its participation in hydroelectric projects in Central Asia, which will take into account the balance of interests of these countries and will give an additional push to the integration processes in those countries.

The Bank works on the assumption that any project in this area needs to be based on consensus among the countries in the region, bearing in mind the interests of the countries that are downstream and upstream along such transnational rivers. Here, we are also using the experience in watercourse management gained by various countries and the specialized agencies of the United Nations. Of special importance in the Bank's activities is the issue of enhancing partnership relations with international organizations and financial institutions. The observer status in the General Assembly, which the Eurasian Development Bank obtained in 2007, gives it new opportunities to promote multilateral cooperation, to enhance our participation on the international front, and to make direct contact with United Nations agencies and regional commissions. These include the United Nations Development Programme, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

The elucidation of mutual interests and the expansion of cooperation among countries, international and national organizations and the Bank are of vital importance. This gives us a better opportunity to coordinate our activities, to be more effective in our projects and, at the end of the day, to improve the lives of the citizens of our countries. We are open to working with the United Nations Organization and with the international community, as a whole, to strengthen the integration process and to promote development in the Eurasian area.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with resolution 48/5 adopted by the General Assembly on 13 October 1993, I would like to give the floor to the representative of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Mr. Baltes (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe): On behalf of the Secretary-General of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), I would like to express my gratitude to His Excellency Cheick Sidi Diarra, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, for inviting us to participate in this high-level plenary meeting devoted to the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action.

The President returned to the Chair.

The OSCE is the world's largest regional security organization and cooperates with the United Nations under Chapter VIII of the Charter. With 56 participating States from Europe, Central Asia and North America, our organization is a primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. While our headquarters with the permanent representations of the participating States and the Secretariat are in Vienna, Austria, we also work through 19 field presences throughout South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

The OSCE, using a comprehensive approach, deals with three dimensions of security — the politico-military, the economic and environmental, and the

human. It therefore addresses a wide range of security-related concerns, including arms control, confidence- and security-building measures, human rights, national minorities, democratization, policing strategies, counter-terrorism and economic and environmental aspects of security. All 56 participating States enjoy equal status, and decisions are taken by consensus.

Since 2006, under Belgian chairmanship, the OSCE has given particular emphasis to the development of transit transportation. Its high-level annual Economic Forum in May 2006 was dedicated to transportation in the OSCE area, including secure transportation networks and transport development, with a view to enhancing regional economic cooperation and stability.

It became very clear during the Forum process that special attention needed to be given to the challenges of OSCE landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) — particularly in Central Asia, the South Caucasus and adjacent regions. At the concluding session, the five Central Asian participating States issued a joint statement in which they highlighted the indivisible link between trade and transport and emphasized that the absence of territorial access to the sea and high transit costs imposed serious restrictions on their socio-economic development.

Based on the statement and on the recommendations of the Forum, the 56 OSCE participating States adopted, at the Ministerial Council meeting in Brussels in December 2006, decision No. 11/06 on the future transport dialogue in the OSCE. The decision supports the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and provides our organization with a strong mandate for continued activities in cooperation with the United Nations.

Pursuant to this adoption, my Office, together with the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States and with the support of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, organized a conference on trans-Asian and Eurasian transit transport development through Central Asia in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. This conference brought together ministers and senior officials from customs, transport and trade ministries from LLDCs in Central Asia and the South Caucasus, as well as senior representatives from various international organizations, some of whom are with us today.

The conference was an important step in raising awareness and enhancing political dialogue on the development of transit transportation in and through Central Asia, including Afghanistan and Mongolia, and in taking stock of the progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action, thereby substantially contributing to its current midterm review.

Following the conference deliberations, a joint Dushanbe statement was agreed upon by the delegations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Mongolia. The text of the statement covers, inter alia, key issues related to fundamental transit transport policies; transport infrastructure development and maintenance; trade, transit and transport facilitation and public private partnerships.

Finally, and this is an element I would like to emphasize, the joint Dushanbe statement highlights the importance of building partnerships, partnerships not only between OSCE LLDCs and their transit neighbours, but also between landlocked countries and other members of the international community. When it comes to forging these partnerships, the OSCE stands ready to play its role as a catalyst, a platform and a forum for bringing together various stakeholders.

As a follow-up, this year's meeting of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum under Finnish Chairmanship focused on maritime and inland waterways cooperation in the OSCE area, in particular on increasing security and protecting the environment. In this context, we examined the issue of transit transportation and revisited the challenges faced by LLDCs, thereby building further on the conclusions and recommendations of previous meetings.

Let me end by assuring you once again of the continued involvement of the OSCE in transport-related activities. In this regard, we will continue to play the role of a facilitator and political catalyst, offering a platform for dialogue and cooperation among our participating States and all stakeholders concerned. Whereas we are not a technical reference organization, our organization is nonetheless well placed to raise political awareness and to foster transnational cooperation between countries. Political dialogue and regional cooperation are the niches where

the OSCE can add value to already existing structures, processes and coordination mechanisms.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker at this high-level meeting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/63/L.3*, entitled "Outcome document of the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries".

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/63/L.3*?

Draft resolution A/63/L.3 was adopted* (resolution 63/2).

The President: I am very pleased that we have concluded this high-level plenary meeting on the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action. As President, I am particularly gratified that this review should have taken place within the General Assembly framework.

Over the past two days, we have been assessing the multifaceted efforts to ensure that landlocked developing countries have efficient transit transport systems to access international markets. We have adopted the Declaration on the midterm review by acclamation. It is a balanced and precise document, which provides the guidance that will enhance the rate of implementation of further projects.

Our focus on action-oriented programmes that are both measurable and feasible has grounded the review in terms that will benefit landlocked and transit countries alike. It also serves to inspire greater donor involvement in the range of needed improvements, from trade assistance policy to infrastructure, from technical and financial assistance to monitoring and follow-up.

In particular, the high-level panel on the role of international support for the development of transport systems to enhance trade opportunities provided a dynamic exchange on those complex issues. Stakeholder representatives from landlocked and transit countries, donor countries, regional and international organizations and financial institutions provided insights into the key partnerships that are emerging from the Programme of Action. We thank all delegations for their valuable input. We now have a clear assessment of where we stand after five years of work.

The United Nations is all about partnerships. I believe that the work orchestrated by the Almaty Programme of Action is a good example of what we can accomplish when we are guided by clear directives and strong leadership within the context of good-faith cooperation. Clearly, a key element in the success of the review is its emphasis on measurable results and the importance of monitoring progress within the five stated priorities of the Programme.

As the leaders of so many Member States said during the general debate in recent weeks, there is concern that the current financial crisis threatens to cripple world trade. A global recession would be doubly catastrophic for the least developed countries that are not only poor, but geographically isolated as well.

I reiterate my concern and my promise that the General Assembly will use all its authority to ensure that the commitments of donor countries to provide funding and needed technology transfers are honoured. I believe there is goodwill, but we must be vigilant as we monitor progress in the difficult months and years ahead.

If the United Nations is all about partnerships, then let us recognize the central role of solidarity in assisting each other as partners and as countries. We face so many obstacles to realizing the shared goal of ending poverty and sharing prosperity among peoples. The work outlined in the Almaty review document is ambitious, but inspired by our sense of solidarity with the peoples of the landlocked countries and their neighbours, we can see that the way is clear and the possibilities endless.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

The General Assembly has thus concluded the high-level meeting devoted to the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action. The Assembly has also thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 52.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.

United Nations A/63/PV.20

General Assembly

Sixty-third session

Official Records

20th plenary meeting
Monday, 6 October 2008, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann ..... (Nicaragua)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 7 (*continued*)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

Request for the inclusion of an additional item submitted by the Secretary-General (A/63/232)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The General Assembly will now consider a request submitted by the Secretary-General in document A/63/232, relating to the judges of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991.

In his note, the Secretary-General informs the General Assembly that the current terms of office of the ad litem judges and the permanent judges come to an end on 23 August 2009 and on 16 November 2009, respectively.

In the absence of a provision by the Statute of the International Tribunal to extend the terms of office of those judges, the approval of the Security Council and of the General Assembly would be needed in order to extend the terms of office of the ad litem and permanent judges of the Tribunal.

In addition, on 13 August 2008, after consultation with the President of the Security Council and the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General appointed Mr. Christoph Flügge of Germany to replace Judge Wolfgang Schomburg, who will resign from service with the International Tribunal on 18 November 2008.

In order for the Assembly to consider those matters, the Secretary-General has requested, pursuant to rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion in the agenda of the sixty-third session of the Assembly of an additional item entitled "Judges of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991".

Owing to the important and urgent nature of the item, unless there is an objection, may I take it that the General Assembly agrees that the relevant provision of rule 40 of the rules of procedure, which would require a meeting of the General Committee on the question of the inclusion of this item in the agenda, could be waived?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): May I take it that the General Assembly, on the proposal of the Secretary-General, wishes to include in the agenda of the current session an additional item entitled "Judges of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991" under heading I, "Organizational, administrative and other matters"?

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

08-53664 (E)

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The item is therefore included as item 154.

In his note, the Secretary-General further requests that the item be considered directly in plenary meeting. May I take it that the General Assembly, as requested by the Secretary-General, wishes to consider this item directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The General Assembly will consider this item on Thursday, 9 October 2008, after the issuance of the relevant documents relating to the item.

Agenda item 100 (*continued*)

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/63/1)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Members will recall that the Secretary-General presented his annual report (A/63/1) to the General Assembly at its 5th plenary meeting, on 23 September 2008.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Armenia, associate themselves with this statement.

I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the work of the Organization (A/63/1). The details of the views of the European Union (EU) on some of the report's main topics and on the main challenges ahead will be distributed to members. I take this opportunity to highlight certain issues.

The EU is fully committed to an effective multilateralism in which a central role is played by the United Nations. Strengthening the United Nations is a European priority. The EU remains convinced that the reforms of the United Nations system need to make rapid progress with a view to enhancing the Organization's representativity, transparency and effectiveness. The EU reiterates its commitment to engaging actively to that end in an open and substantive dialogue with all Member States.

The EU is committed to Secretariat management reform in order to allow the Secretary-General to improve human resources and personnel accountability and introduce results-based administrative methods.

As in the past, the reform of the operational activities of the United Nations is a priority for the EU in order to contribute more effectively to the development of the countries of the South. The EU strongly supports the resolution recently adopted by the General Assembly on system-wide coherence aimed at strengthening the capacity of United Nations entities to harmonize their efforts in the area of development. The EU fully supports efforts to further strengthen the capabilities of the United Nations system in the area of gender equality and the empowerment of women through a consolidated entity.

The EU strongly supports the three main pillars of the United Nations referred to in the Secretary-General's report: sustainable development, peace and security and human rights, which are interconnected and mutually reinforcing.

In terms of sustainable development, the EU remains strongly committed to the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, in particular the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It has very actively contributed, collectively and through individual initiatives of its member States, to the success of the high-level meeting on Africa's development needs and the high-level meeting on the MDGs, held here recently. The EU welcomes the decision to hold a new high-level meeting on the MDGs in 2010. The EU will continue to encourage the international community, developed and developing countries alike, to redouble their efforts to achieve the MDGs, particularly in Africa.

The EU is deeply concerned about the steep increase in food prices, including staple foods. The crisis, combined with the energy crisis, could jeopardize the achievement of the MDGs and increase social and political tensions. Following the conference held in Rome in June, the EU made a number of proposals to mitigate the effects of the crisis. The EU commends the Secretary-General for having taken immediate action by setting up the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, tasked with promoting coordinated action between all United Nations agencies.

Tackling climate change is, of course, a key priority for both the United Nations and the EU. The EU strongly supports the central role of the United Nations in the elaboration of a post-2012 global climate change agreement and is actively participating in the global negotiations to be completed no later than the end of 2009, when the fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will be held in Copenhagen.

In order to meet those combined challenges, the European Union will honour its commitments in the area of financing for development. We will work to ensure that the Doha Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus produces significant results. Along with all its development partners, the European Union will also work to improve the quality and impact of its aid.

With regard to peace and security, the European Union believes that it is essential to strengthen the operational capacity of the United Nations. Europe unreservedly supports the efforts made by the United Nations in the area of preventive diplomacy and mediation. We believe that it is necessary to adequately strengthen and structure the Department of Peacekeeping Operations with a view to improving planning, command and information management at the strategic level.

The European Union acknowledges the intrinsic link between security, political, development and humanitarian aspects in peacekeeping operations. We shall pay particular attention to potential interaction and synergies between United Nations peacekeeping operations and those of the European Union in order to maximize their joint impact on the ground.

The European Union will continue to place emphasis on the post-conflict efforts of the United Nations. We reiterate our support for the Peacebuilding Commission and call for the strengthening of its capacities so that it can achieve its full potential.

The European Union is resolved to increase its support for the efforts of the United Nations to combat terrorism, as well as to contribute to strengthening international consensus on a normative framework. In that regard, the European Union welcomes the consensus that prevailed during first formal review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy since its adoption by the General Assembly. It should serve to motivate Member States in their negotiations on a comprehensive convention on international terrorism to supplement the existing legal framework.

The European Union remains committed to international disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. We shall continue to work towards a successful outcome to the review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, including the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The European Union underscores the importance of the work done to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We welcome the successful outcome of the Second Conference of the States Parties to Review the Operation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

We support the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on small arms and light weapons, as well as the range of efforts undertaken to combat the uncontrolled spread of conventional weapons, including small arms and their ammunition.

With regard to international justice, the goal of ending impunity for those responsible for serious crimes continues to be at the top of the European Union's priorities. We firmly believe that there can be no lasting peace without independent international justice. We reiterate our support for international criminal tribunals, and especially the International Criminal Court.

With regard to humanitarian assistance, the European Union will continue tangibly and coherently to promote both international humanitarian law and its greater observance. The European Union will work to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance in line with country-specific or thematic resolutions and along the lines of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, which emphasizes the fundamental principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. We strongly underscore the need to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and to guarantee humanitarian access to people in need of assistance.

The European Union attaches great importance to implementing the principle of the responsibility to protect, which was adopted at the 2005 World Summit. We shall participate actively in the General Assembly and the Security Council in the consideration of the

issue of protecting populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Promoting and strengthening the rule of law at the national and international levels remains one of the European Union's priorities. We emphasize the need to provide all the necessary support to the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group, which is supported by the Rule of Law Unit in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, so that it may effectively carry out its functions.

In the year of the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the promotion and protection of human rights remains one of the key priorities of the European Union, which will pay special attention to improving the effectiveness of all relevant United Nations mechanisms.

The Human Rights Council, which has now put its institutional mechanisms in place, should continue to play a crucial role. The European Union will work actively in order to further enhance that role. At the same time, we shall continue to support the Third Committee as the body with universal membership that can effectively promote the implementation of human rights standards and further promote thematic issues of global importance. The Third Committee is also a relevant forum to address country-specific issues pertaining to certain countries.

Lastly, the European Union fully supports the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, whose independence must be ensured.

The European Union is committed to providing the United Nations with the resources necessary to address international issues relating to peace and security, development and the promotion of human rights, in which the Organization has a central role to play. We shall continue to contribute our fair share of the expenses of the United Nations. Nevertheless, we are concerned about the growth of the regular budget of the United Nations, the continued use of add-ons and the piecemeal approach to the last budget process. The European Union will engage constructively during the sixty-third session to promote sound financial management and rigorous budgetary discipline.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Secretary-General and the entire staff of the Secretariat. On behalf of the European Union, I should like to convey our gratitude for their commitment and achievements in carrying out the mandate we have entrusted to them. They are working under increasingly difficult and dangerous conditions. I assure them of the full support of the European Union.

Ms. Blum (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the first time that I address the General Assembly in plenary meeting during the sixty-third session, allow me to congratulate you on your election, Mr. President, and to wish you every success in your work. Likewise, I should like to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General for preparing and introducing his report (A/63/1) on the work of the Organization and for his effective efforts at the helm of the United Nations.

We note with interest the Secretary-General's approach of focusing the efforts of the Organization on three key areas: delivering results for those most in need, securing global goods and creating a stronger United Nations through full accountability. The challenges facing the Organization are enormous. They include the difficulties we face in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the need to intensify efforts to eradicate poverty and ensure sustained economic growth and sustainable development. Those challenges entail a broader dimension in the case of middle-income countries. Despite the progress they have made with regard to growth, there are limiting factors in the implementation of long-term growth programmes. The United Nations and the international community must pay attention to the priorities and needs of middle-income countries, especially given the current global financial crisis.

The dialogue on the global food crisis must continue to be a priority of the United Nations. In that regard, we reiterate our satisfaction at the creation of the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, as well as at the rest of the activities being carried out by the Organization to address the problem.

We agree with the Secretary-General concerning the urgency of breaking the impasse on agricultural trade liberalization. The imbalances in international markets must be faced in order to improve investment and agricultural development conditions in developing countries. The relationship between the global food crisis, the global demand for energy and climate change must continue to be addressed as a necessary step in preparing effective actions on those three fronts.

As pointed out by President Alvaro Uribe Vélez in his statement during the general debate two weeks ago, Colombia finds itself in a privileged position to contribute effectively and responsibly to the protection of the environment and the promotion of alternative energy. Colombia has more than 43 million hectares of savannah area, a large portion of which is underutilized, where it is possible to increase agricultural production and develop the biofuel industry by growing sugar cane and African oil palm without affecting food production. That new industry has brought great benefits to the country, reflected in a greater dynamism in the agriculture and livestock sector, the generation of thousands of rural jobs and the stimulation of investment, as well as research and technological development.

Colombia firmly maintains its commitment to the global fight against terrorism. In that regard, my country rejects all forms and manifestations of that scourge and supports initiatives aimed at putting a definitive end to that terrible crime. Through our democratic security policy and our comprehensive approach to fighting terrorism, Colombia has made great progress in containing and eliminating that threat and in reducing crime rates. Security has been re-established throughout the national territory, while the rule of law has been consolidated and democratic institutions have been strengthened. Likewise, we have achieved the demobilization and reintegration of approximately 48,000 persons formerly belonging to illegal armed groups.

Colombia attaches great importance to fulfilling its commitments under the framework of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We are aware that the world will never be able to overcome that scourge without the full commitment of all United Nations Member States to condemning terrorist actions in all their forms and increasing cooperation and information exchange among States. Likewise, we must be committed to the fight against all related crimes, such as asset laundering and illicit drug trafficking, the principal source of financing for terrorism.

My delegation would like to highlight the initiative of the Secretary-General to achieve greater accountability within the Secretariat. We join in his call for Member States to fulfil their obligations in order to allow the implementation of established mandates. The strengthening, relevance and effectiveness of the Organization depend on the full commitment of all who are part of it.

Strengthening the work of the United Nations and contributing to the search for effective solutions are joint tasks. In that regard, we welcome the strengthening of ties between the Organization and civil society, as well as with the business community. To achieve real progress in meeting the challenges before us, it is essential to actively involve broad segments of society. Greater participation by those sectors can help us to attain the goals we have set for ourselves, in harmony with the central role of States in the coordination and implementation of activities on the ground.

We are more than halfway towards the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and the challenges are greater than ever. The world needs the full commitment of the United Nations and of each of its Member States in order to overcome the new obstacles facing our Organization and achieve the goals agreed upon by our heads of State and Government eight years ago.

Allow me to reiterate our support for the work of the Secretary-General and for his determination to lead the United Nations with dedication, focus and commitment, as well as our disposition to work together in search of a better world.

Mr. Malmierca Díaz (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for the presentation of his annual report (A/61/1). The report clearly affirms that development is not the privilege of a handful of people, but a right for all. Development must enjoy a predominant place on the agenda of the United Nations. Thus, we welcome the commitment of the Secretary-General to giving special priority to this issue and to strengthening the role of the United Nations in its promotion, acknowledging the need to scale up financing as one of the keys to achieving real progress.

We consider the proposal on strengthening the development pillar of the Secretariat to be important. The matter is being carefully studied by our country and we will actively and constructively participate in its debate. We must ensure that the Organization has the necessary tools to meet the expectations of Member States, particularly developing countries.

In general, we agree with the report's overview of the complex situation regarding the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly amid the difficult current international situation, marked by the convergence of various international crises. Let us say it very clearly: the Millennium Development Goals will not be met. They will not be met, not because the goals outlined are too ambitious; on the contrary, they are very timid and insufficient. The Goals will not be met because the current international order is profoundly unjust and unsustainable, given that the current economic, commercial and financial order marginalizes 80 per cent of the world's population, sacrificing them for the extravagance of a very small minority.

The Millennium Development Goals will remain an unattainable dream for the great majority because more than 100 countries of the South do not and will not have the $150 billion needed to achieve them — a sum that represents barely 10 per cent of the more than $1 trillion spent today on military expenditure.

Although the report mentions other internationally agreed-upon development goals, it fails to identify specific proposals on how the Organization should act to address key issues, such as a lasting solution to external debt crisis, the reform of the international financial architecture and other problems that are part of a much wider and more diverse development agenda.

The establishment of an international order based on solidarity, social justice, equity and respect for the rights of the peoples and of every human being is more urgent than ever before. We do not need more rhetoric or empty promises. The question is whether those who are responsible for the chaotic and unequal world in which we live today are willing to relinquish at least part of their privileges and wastefulness.

We welcome that in the report climate change is acknowledged as one of the main issues of the Organization. That is particularly important given the important negotiation process lying ahead, from which we expect much more ambitious goals to reduce greenhouse gases worldwide.

The "dangerous carbon habit" referred to in paragraph 91 of the report has been identified by Member States in an important consensus reflected in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation adopted by the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which strongly expresses the need to change unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, but mainly those promoted by developed countries. Without this sine qua non, it will not be possible to forward in the battle to free the world from the environmental crisis.

Massive consumer waste in the industrialized countries jeopardizes the survival of the human race. Phenomena such as global warming, the dangerous rise in sea level, the indiscriminate felling of forests, the attempt to use food as fuel to be squandered in the cars of the United States and of Europe, the depletion of fossil fuels and the irrational use of water sources, inter alia, pose dire threats to life. We must act — and act fast — and the developed countries, which are responsible for 76 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions, have the moral obligation and the main historical responsibility here.

We uphold both the need for the existence of the United Nations and its in-depth reform and democratization. But, that must be done in full respect for its Charter without redrafting or distorting its purposes and principles. The main challenge facing us is to reform the United Nations so that it serves the interests of all nations equally. We cannot allow the reform to fail and our Organization to become an instrument serving the interests and whims of a few rich and powerful countries.

The report deals with the controversial topic of the responsibility to protect, while many important questions and legitimate concerns with regard to this concept remain unanswered. It is the duty of the General Assembly to give transparent and deep consideration to this question and to take the necessary decisions. Some intend to implement this concept even before it is clearly defined. Cuba opposes such intentions, since they would open up the possibility of turning the responsibility to protect into an instrument that could easily be manipulated to attack the sacred principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

We must strengthen the General Assembly's leading role as the only United Nations organ where there is no place for hegemonies, where we all have voice and a vote, and where the obsolete right to veto does not exist. On the other hand, we will not be able to talk about true reform of this Organization until a real reform of the Security Council takes place. That is why Cuba welcomes the decision to start, at an early

date and in the framework of the General Assembly, an intergovernmental negotiation process on the reform of the Security Council.

We hope that this process will allow us to make concrete progress as soon as possible. We urgently need a truly equitable and representative Security Council that acts on behalf of all and within the mandate conferred upon it by the Charter, without encroaching, as it is increasingly doing, on the functions and prerogatives of other bodies of the system.

The political manipulation of human rights, selectivity, partiality and double standards in the handling of these matters by the most powerful countries must cease. We have the sacred duty to protect and promote all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, against the attempt to mutilate, rewrite or reinterpret them so as to adjust them to the unipolar order and the hegemonic interests of the few.

We will have to continue working so that the genuine international cooperation becomes the cornerstone of the work of the Human Rights Council. In his report, the Secretary-General highlights the increasing presence on the ground of the United Nations bodies devoted to human rights, as well as the bolstering of the Organization's rapid response capacity in this area. However, in this context, it is vital to stress the importance of fully applying the principle that human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent.

Bearing in mind that, by describing activity in the field, the report limits itself only to developing countries, giving the impression that work on human rights is not necessary in industrialized countries. However, in the industrialized world there is still much to do. Accordingly, the application of the principle of consent should always be taken into account to promote what the Secretary-General designates as a new era in human rights.

There cannot be democracy without the participation of the people, without social justice, without individual and collective well-being and without human solidarity. These guidelines should be taken into consideration in the work of the United Nations Democracy Fund.

With regard to system-wide coherence in the United Nations, it is necessary to acknowledge that operational activities should be guided, first and foremost, by the national policies and development priorities of each country. The United Nations development bodies in the field must not engage in activities that are not directly linked to economic and social development, let alone promote conditionality in their work. The developing countries' views and priorities, as well as respect for intergovernmental mandates in the field of operational activities, are essential.

I would like to finish by supporting the conclusion of the Secretary-General in his report that,

> "Today, more than ever, thanks to its universal membership and global reach, the United Nations can effect positive global change, making the world a safer, more prosperous and more just place for all people." (*para. 141*)

The challenges that lie ahead are serious ones. More than ever, the world needs the United Nations.

Mr. Le Luong Minh (Viet Nam): Mr. President, at the outset, on behalf of the Vietnamese delegation, I would like to congratulate you on your election as President of this sixty-third session of the General Assembly and pledge to you our fullest cooperation with a view to contributing to its success.

I thank the Secretary-General for his report on the work of the Organization contained in document A/63/1 covering a wide spectrum of important issues, such as development, peace and security, human rights, humanitarian affairs and United Nations reform.

Eight years after our leaders adopted the Millennium Declaration, we share the concern expressed by the Secretary-General that, although significant gains have been recorded towards the global goal of halving extreme poverty by 2015, many countries will not be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. More than one billion people in the world continue to live below the poverty line. Hundreds of millions are suffering from hunger. Tens of millions of school-age children are not in school. Discrimination and violence against women remain widespread. In the year 2007 alone, there were 2.5 million new cases of HIV infection. Lack of access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation continues to make the hard life of the poor even harder.

Against the backdrop of the global food crisis, the increase in energy prices, global warming, climate

change and the global economic slowdown all pose a real threat, undermining the progress made by developing countries in their struggle to overcome the status of underdevelopment and mitigate the negative impacts that development has had on those most in need, namely the poor, women and children. With half the world's adult population owning only 1 per cent of the global wealth, as the Secretary-General pointed out, the ills of the developing world cannot be cured without genuine and active cooperation and assistance from the developed countries within the framework of a global partnership for development, which he emphasized as being critical. We join his call for delivery on official development assistance commitments, and we hope that his goal of $50 billion per year by 2010 will be achieved.

Equally important as a means to make globalization contribute to, rather than hinder, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is an open, rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory trading and financial system. The delayed conclusion of the Doha Round of trade negotiations will, among other things, not only worsen the food crisis, but also make the efforts to overcome it even more difficult. The successful conclusion of the Doha Round must be set as a high priority for Member States.

Less than two weeks ago, under your guidance, Sir, the General Assembly held two high-level events on the MDGs and on the special needs of Africa, where our leaders, together with other stakeholders, analysed the situation, shared success stories and lessons learned, discussed new initiatives and made new promises. The lives of hundreds of millions of people in the world living on less than 1 dollar a day, especially those in Africa, depend on whether our actions in the coming years will turn those promises into their food, shelter, education and health, as the Secretary-General put it, and the international community must not disappoint their hopes.

During the past year, the maintenance of international peace and security has continued to face intertwined opportunities and challenges. In addition to 17 operating missions, the ongoing deployment of other peacekeeping operations in Africa is expected to create more leverage for strengthening the local peacemaking process and ultimately ending the prolonged crises. Preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention and mediation efforts led by the United Nations have helped reinforce political dialogue and national reconciliation in the service of lasting peace and stability in many countries in Africa and Asia. By the same token, peacebuilding activities have contributed to promoting peace agreements, laying the foundation for sustainable peace and development and addressing the special needs of conflict-affected States.

However, besides the escalation of protracted armed conflicts and tensions in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia, the outbreak of new disputes in the Balkans and the Caucasus add to our shared concern. The growing complexity of protracted conflicts has caused an abrupt surge in the demand for peacekeeping operations and overstretched the capacity of the Organization on multiple related fronts. Terrorism also continues to be a serious threat to international peace and security and an assault on the principles of law and order, human rights and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

In the face of those challenges, we fully support the Secretary-General's conclusion that the crucial role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security must be reaffirmed and further strengthened. We commend and support the recent steps undertaken by the Secretary-General to improve the management of the Organization in the fields of peacekeeping operations, conflict prevention and resolution and disarmament, and we stand ready to contribute further to the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288), adopted by the General Assembly in 2006 on the basis of the fundamental principles of respect for national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

Mr. Kpotsra (Togo), Vice-President, took the Chair.

This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, which has remained the key instrument for promoting universal respect for and observance of all human rights in accordance with the United Nations Charter and international law. While sharing the Secretary-General's positive assessment of the wide international acceptance of and consensus on human rights standards and the strengthening of tools and mechanisms for monitoring and encouraging compliance, we remain concerned about the continued trend of politicizing human rights and using human rights as a pretext to interfere in the internal affairs of

States, thus complicating regional and international situations and creating hurdles for the process of United Nations reform by making the work of United Nations bodies overlap.

In that connection, I wish to reaffirm Viet Nam's view that the protection and promotion of human rights can only be effective when they are in keeping with the principles of objectivity and non-selectivity and when we are able to avoid their politicization, a disease that had, for decades, paralysed the former Commission on Human Rights.

As reported by the Secretary-General, the rise in the number and intensity of extreme weather events throughout the review period is striking, with an increasing number of poor people being affected by drought, floods and cyclones. The fragile security and deadly violence in Iraq, Afghanistan, the occupied Palestinian territories and many other conflict-ridden regions have forced millions of people into exile and internal displacement, with larger and larger numbers of civilians requiring urgent humanitarian assistance and access.

Climate change and armed conflicts are exacerbating both natural and man-made disasters and making them more dangerous than ever before, demanding even greater international cooperation to cope with them. We welcome the Secretary-General's commitment to enhancing the United Nations partnership with regional organizations and Governments in preparing for and responding to such challenges.

In order to adapt to a vastly changed world and better fulfil its mandates under the Charter, the United Nations and its principal organs, including the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and specialized agencies, must be strengthened in a more comprehensive and democratic manner. Furthermore, the experience of the past year in mediating the resolution of conflicts and mitigating the consequences of natural disasters manifests even more clearly the indispensable and effective role of regional organizations. That experience also shows that the roles of the United Nations and of regional organizations should and can be mutually strengthening. Viet Nam will continue to contribute to efforts aimed at making the United Nations, in close partnership with regional organizations, more representative, more effective and more responsive to the interests of Member States and their peoples.

Mr. Davide (Philippines): I am honoured to take the floor to put on record my delegation's commendation to the Secretary-General for the achievements of our Organization, which His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon summed up in the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, contained in document A/63/1, covering United Nations activities during his second year in office. My delegation congratulates our bold, dynamic, brilliant and eminently competent Secretary-General for this magnum opus.

The 28-page report modestly refrains from extolling the heroic performance of our Organization's international civil servants, both in the field and at Headquarters. Yet, we know deep in our hearts that the achievements of our Organization would not have been possible without the individual and collective hard work, dedication to duty and exemplary performance of those men and women.

The report is both comprehensive and balanced. It highlights the accomplishments of our Organization in the face of daunting and complex challenges that confront it in the pursuit of the three pillars of the United Nations, namely, development, peace and security and human rights.

A new generation of global challenges, such as climate change, terrorism, food and energy crises and now the financial crisis, unmatched by adequate resources or even political will, weighs heavily on the United Nations — the sole universal body upon which the world, especially its 192 Members, looks to for help, support and solutions, or even for just inspiration and hope. It is too fearful to imagine a world that can no longer find that inspiration and hope in the United Nations.

In light of the growing menace and increasing threats posed by traditional and new challenges to peace and stability, to the elimination of hunger and poverty, to relief from diseases of worldwide proportions, to assistance for sudden man-made and natural calamities, to refugees and migrants driven from their homes owing to conflicts or economic need and to a host of other global concerns, we need to pay heed to the conclusions of the Secretary-General and act swiftly and decisively on his recommendations before these global problems reach catastrophic levels.

In order to deliver results for the people most in need, we need to awaken ourselves to the grim realities

prevailing among the world's poor, hearken to the voice of conscience and overcome selfishness by summoning our innate good Samaritan spirit in order to help lift the 1.2 billion still mired in extreme poverty, the 1.2 billion suffering from neglected tropical diseases, the 1 billion lacking access to safe drinking water, the 2.6 billion without access to adequate sanitation and the 9.9 million refugees, particularly in Africa. Each day of delay in reaching out to them worsens their plight and aggravates their agony.

This brings us to the urgency of meeting the targets we set for ourselves in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) less than seven years from now. The achievement of our MDG commitments consists not only in the statistical process of halving poverty and achieving other development goals, but also synergistically involves other development processes, particularly financing for development, the Doha Round of multilateral trade talks and development cooperation for aid effectiveness. We cannot afford to fail in reaching consensus here. Otherwise, we risk the escalation of political tensions into the conflicts that poverty and lack of basic education spawn.

The Philippines wishes, therefore, to echo the call of the Secretary-General to achieve the $50 billion per year by 2010 in official development assistance based on 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of donor countries in order to create a better life for our world's poor.

Through preventive diplomacy and support for peace processes, our Organization, under the skilful stewardship of the Secretary-General, ably assisted Nepal in its current transition to a new democratic future. It handled and guided the preparatory process for national dialogue in the Central African Republic, the post-electoral mediation process in Kenya, the confidence-building process in Darfur, the moving forward of the political process in Somalia and in the launching and facilitation of a preparatory process leading to possible full-fledged negotiations in Cyprus.

The good offices capacity of the Secretary-General deserves to be strengthened and enhanced in order to broaden the scope of his positive influence in easing tensions in other flashpoints of the world, including Iraq and the Middle East.

It is no easy task to maintain 130,000 United Nations military and police peacekeepers supplied by 117 Member States and deployed in 19 missions around the world. The Philippines, as one of the significant troop and police contributing countries, will continue to remain actively engaged in United Nations-led peacekeeping operations, cognizant of the fact that peacekeeping leads not only to sustainable peace but also to peacebuilding and sustained development.

Another important function of the United Nations that crosscuts its three pillars is the delivery of humanitarian assistance to peoples stricken by natural disasters, which, in some instances, have been aggravated by man's neglect or abuse of the environment. As a natural disaster-prone country itself, the Philippines has benefited from the flash appeals launched by the United Nations and is grateful for the quick assistance extended by the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund, an effective multilateral relief mechanism that needs continued contributions from Member States to ensure predictability and adequacy of its resources for emergency situations.

As for securing the well-being of future generations, the Philippines concurs with the identification by the Secretary-General of four critical areas of concern upon which the survival of succeeding generations depend. They are climate change, disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, terrorism and global health.

We now have the Bali Road Map, designed last year. It sets out a process for developing a new global agreement aimed at confronting climate change. The negotiation process launched in Bali will continue until its progress is reviewed in December of this year at the meeting of the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Poznan, Poland, leading, hopefully, to an agreed outcome in Copenhagen next year.

We should not only mainstream climate change into policy and development plans, but also partner with the private sector in integrating climate change into their corporate operations. Climate change is not the responsibility of Governments alone. All must cooperate as the common inhabitants of this fragile planet, who have the responsibility to ensure that the generations yet to come shall not inherit a parched Earth incapable of sustaining life.

This is the concept of intergenerational responsibility or intergenerational justice and equity. In this regard, let me also reiterate what I have said before: that justice in the area of climate change demands that

developed countries, which have caused much damage to the environment or to the ecological balance to the detriment of the least developed or developing countries, must do more to repair the damage.

The centrepiece of all nuclear disarmament measures is the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The preparatory process leading to the 2010 Review Conference of NPT parties is under way. The Philippines intends to play an active role by fielding a qualified candidate to preside over the Review Conference, aware of the dangers of the continued strategic and non-strategic nuclear stockpiles for human existence.

The effective implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy requires innovative initiatives and long-term partnerships among Governments, the United Nations system, regional organizations and civil society.

For its part, the Philippines will intensify its advocacy of interfaith dialogue and cooperation to promote understanding and tolerance among peoples of different faiths and cultures. This will complement related initiatives, such as the Alliance of Civilizations. These initiatives, unlike weapons of war — conventional or otherwise — can better establish the genuine foundation of trust and understanding and create a more peaceful world for present and future generations.

Healthy people beget a sound nation. Hippocrates said that health is the greatest of human blessings. Disraeli claimed that the health of the people is really the foundation upon which all their happiness and all their powers as a nation depend. Poor health produces weak people, both in mind and body. Poor health lowers productivity, hence it can cause the economy to stagnate.

The provision of health care and the prevention and cure of infectious diseases, notably in tropical countries, are an intergenerational process that calls for a long-term strategy. The least developed countries sorely need external help, and the Philippines supports the view of the Secretary-General that the United Nations should take the lead in shaping the future of global health and focusing on critical priorities leading to functioning and affordable health systems by coordinating with Governments, philanthropies, foundations, the private sector, academia and civil society.

With respect to empowering the Secretariat, my delegation strongly supports the efforts of the Secretary-General in favour of a management infrastructure in the Secretariat built around achieving concrete results and his proposal for a new accountability architecture that will make the Secretariat effective and efficient in its implementation and coordination of the mandates entrusted to it by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council.

As the chief executive officer, the Secretary-General needs to dispose of broad latitude in his discretionary powers in managing the Secretariat, including with respect to its internal reforms, given the limited financial resources at his disposal. Such flexibility is needed to enable him to meet the growing and changing demands on our Organization.

In the field, it behoves the Secretariat to consider utilizing a client-analysis approach to sensitize operations to the needs and particularities of developing countries, its clients, which it is expected to serve or support. The top-down analysis of the relevance of operational tools formulated at Headquarters should be complemented by a bottom-up approach that draws inputs from Governments, which have the primacy of the ownership of country programmes, to sharpen those tools to yield maximum dividends at the country level.

The Philippines also endorses the Secretary-General's current thrust in maximizing the benefits of cooperating with regional organizations and in promoting partnership with civil society and the private sector.

Let me conclude by asserting that my delegation is gratified by the overall success of our Organization in addressing the manifold global concerns during the year under review. This success is attributed mainly to the effective leadership of the Secretary-General and the support of his senior management team. My delegation is confident that, during the Secretary-General's third year in office, our Organization will be able to do more to build on the strong foundation it has laid down so far and to reach out to and touch more people all over the world and assure them of better lives and a brighter future. Along the way, let their hope for that remain constant and strong.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, let me thank the Secretary-General for his report on the work of the Organization, contained in document A/63/1. Beyond observing the formality of

keeping the General Assembly fully informed on the activities of the Secretariat, the document lays the groundwork for our intergovernmental organ's ongoing interaction with the Secretary-General in the framework of the healthy precedent he has established — and which he mentions in his report — to give this forum periodic briefings on topical issues. We welcome and appreciate that rapprochement of the General Assembly and the Secretariat, which is the essential basis for the good governance of this Organization.

The report reveals the scope and breadth of the tasks undertaken by the United Nations in recent times in the context of a changing global environment, marked by some lights and many shadows. In that regard, the charts that form part of the report illustrate that, when it comes to meeting the Millennium Development Goals, we are faced with the proverbial half-full glass, aggravated by the fact that the distance that separates those countries that have made the greatest progress from those on the opposite end of the scale has tended to grow. Said differently, and as confirmed at the meeting held on 25 September to assess the progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals, we face a decidedly mixed picture. Nor has there been progress in resolving some of the more intractable conflicts on the agenda of the Security Council, the capacity to react of which seems to face growing difficulties.

The same can be said of environmental matters; our stewardship of the planet's resources and even its climate leave much to be desired. On the other hand, we observe important achievements in the field of humanitarian assistance, which is significant, given the unusual number of natural and man-made disasters that have occurred. We also applaud the improvement of the capacity of the Secretariat in establishing productive partnerships with regional organizations, especially on the African continent.

The main thrust of my remarks today, however, is focused on our Organization and its performance. There, too, the half-full or half-empty glass syndrome has made itself felt. We recognize the progress made, as set forth in the report, both in addressing topics of crucial importance and in adapting the Organization to new realities. At the same time, we have some concerns that flow from the report. I should like to refer to four aspects in which, in our view, both the Secretariat and the intergovernmental machinery can and must make greater efforts to make our Organization more relevant.

In the first place, the ever-expanding agenda of the Organization, although having the virtue of addressing the development, peace and security, humanitarian and democratic governance agendas in an integral fashion, has the downside of losing focus on those matters that are vital and separating them from those that are merely important. Perhaps we need to return to our roots and reinterpret the explicit and implicit vision offered by the Charter of the United Nations in the light of the challenges of the twenty-first century. We believe that some steps were taken in that direction in the Millennium Declaration of 2000 and in the Outcome Document of the 2005 Summit, but we find that this year's report lacks a clearer framework that could bring the vision into greater relief.

Secondly, although the report reflects the recent changes in the international environment and even correctly points out that the combined energy and food crises may seriously compromise progress in the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals, its tone is somewhat in the mode of "business as usual" even as the world is being shaken by simultaneous tremors in the economic, financial, political and social spheres, all of which will have dramatic long-term consequences.

We are facing enormously important changes in the real world, and even in the world of ideas. One would like to see the United Nations on top or even ahead of those changes, rather than being dragged in their wake. We recognize that this may be a tall order, given the scale and complexity of the challenges, but it confirms the urgent need to adapt the Organization to current and future demands. In that regard, it is only fair to recognize that the Secretary-General has taken some important steps in that direction.

That brings me to my third observation. We agree with the Secretary-General that it is necessary to introduce reforms both in the Secretariat and — perhaps even more importantly — in the intergovernmental machinery. However, it would be useful to have a road map and a global vision of Secretariat reform, rather than addressing the work piecemeal, department by department. Such an approach forces us yet again to focus on a few trees, at the cost of losing sight of the forest.

Fourthly, the United Nations functions only to the extent that all of its parts — the Secretariat and the intergovernmental organs — are able to coordinate their respective roles. We, the Member States, cannot

require the Secretariat on the one hand, to comply with an ever greater range of mandates if we do not provide, on the other hand, the resources it needs to respond to and carry out those mandates.

We recognize that partial efforts have been made to finance some of the new initiatives identified in the Outcome Document of the 2005 Summit, but many tasks that the Secretariat has been charged with, such as the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, lack budgetary viability.

We also cannot ask the Secretariat to take action beyond the scope of Governments' delegation of authority. Certainly, the Secretariat has little to contribute beyond its capacity to formulate recommendations on the reform of the intergovernmental organs, including the Security Council, since the latter falls within the exclusive purview of Member States.

With that said, we fully agree with the Secretary-General on the singular nature of the United Nations. It is an important asset of humanity, and the world would be worse off without it. We must preserve and update that heritage, a task that falls jointly to the Secretariat and Member States. We have to give greater focus to our priorities. We must provide the Secretariat with the resources it needs to carry out its mission, and we must finish adapting the structure of the Secretariat and the intergovernmental forums to the complex demands of our times.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): My thanks go to the Secretary-General for his annual report on the work of the Organization (A/63/1), which provides a comprehensive and clear overview of what was achieved over the past year and also lays out what must be accomplished in the future.

This year, the international community has faced a plethora of unprecedented and unexpected challenges. Those include high food and fuel prices, climate change, a slowdown of economic growth and financial volatility. All of those crises once again confirm that a swift and common global response is vital and that the United Nations should play a central role in stirring up public awareness, drawing the attention of Member States, designing tailored strategies and actions to target each crisis, and finally pushing the community to move forward.

In that regard, my delegation would like to commend the rapid response of the Secretary-General to the food security crisis, including the establishment of the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, which produced the Comprehensive Framework for Action, providing Member States and all other relevant actors with a clear road map for tackling the crisis.

The current global food crisis will not be overcome through the efforts of any single player. Rather, it requires the joint efforts of the international community along with the coordination of the United Nations. As my Prime Minister announced in his address to the General Assembly, Korea will contribute $100 million over the next three years for emergency food aid and expand its technical cooperation to increase the agricultural productivity of developing countries.

Passing the halfway mark to the target year 2015 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), we believe that special attention should also be given to regional disparities. The efforts to alleviate Africa's extreme poverty do not seem to be making progress. More resources and attention should be allocated to address processes that have been seriously derailed and to assist off-track countries.

Keeping in mind the need to take a more active role in the global partnership for development, the Republic of Korea has increased our aid volume at a rapid pace over the past decade and introduced a road map to scale up our official development assistance (ODA). With the new ODA road map in place, our aid is expected to triple from the current level to about $3.3 billion in 2015. In addition, under Korea's Initiative for Africa's Development, begun in 2006, we have tripled our ODA to Africa during the past three years and are set to scale up further. In that vein, we also support strengthening the capacities of African countries in trade and expanding duty-free and quota-free access for products from the least developed countries.

Turning to climate change, the international community, including developed and developing countries, should make meaningful progress in designing the post-2012 climate change regime. Given the current deadlock in the negotiation process, my delegation believes that Member States need to accelerate their efforts to reach an agreement within the time frame of the Bali Road Map. In that regard, my delegation would like to express our full support

for the energetic leadership of the Secretary-General, who has worked tirelessly to ensure a successful agreement on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change by December 2009, when we are to meet in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Moreover, as President of the Republic of Korea Lee Myung-bak announced at the Group of Eight extended summit meeting in Japan, we support the global vision of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 50 per cent by 2050. Next year, we plan to announce our voluntary midterm mitigation goal for the year 2020. My delegation would like to reiterate that the Korean Government is ready to contribute to the global response to climate change by hosting a new world summit in 2012 to focus on climate change and sustainable development, so as to contribute to the robust launch of a post-2012 climate regime.

In the area of peace and security, conflict situations need to be prevented or resolved mainly through political means. In order for the United Nations to achieve that daunting goal, the Secretary-General's good offices and political mediation role should be strengthened to tackle conflicts as they arise on multiple fronts. My delegation would like to congratulate the Secretary-General on his efforts and leadership in the peace processes in such diverse areas as Nepal, the Central African Republic, Kenya, Darfur, Somalia, Cyprus and the Middle East. We fully share the view that the Department of Political Affairs has to be strengthened to effectively practice preventive diplomacy. In that regard, we believe that better functioning preventive diplomacy is likely to reduce the costs of the peacekeeping budget in the long run and, more important, save lives on the ground.

On this, the sixtieth anniversary year of United Nations peacekeeping operations, the restructuring of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has been successfully completed and several essential doctrine documents have been finalized, including the capstone doctrine. The Republic of Korea will continue to support peacekeeping operations by renewing our troop deployment to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and by enacting legislation to further expand our participation in peacekeeping operations.

Transforming the fragile peace of post-conflict situations into durable peace is not an easy task. However, without such efforts, peace cannot be fully consolidated. We congratulate the newly launched United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone and hope that it will contribute to the country's long-term security and development. The Republic of Korea is hopeful that it can play a more active role in that area by joining the Peacebuilding Commission.

As the Secretary-General's report highlights, we have witnessed alarming humanitarian situations of unprecedented magnitude in the past year. During the humanitarian crisis caused by Cyclone Nargis, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon helped millions by embarking on a landmark visit to Myanmar and by making a breakthrough on securing humanitarian access. At the same time, his visit to the devastated population of Wenchun, China, which was suffering from a recent earthquake, illustrated just how important humanitarian work and a prompt response by the United Nations truly are.

Despite significant strides in delivering accountable and timely assistance from the humanitarian community, there are still key challenges that must be addressed, such as the denial of access and the threat to the safety of humanitarian workers. The United Nations should continue to make further efforts to address those challenges in order to secure the timely delivery of assistance to those most in need.

Turning to human rights, the United Nations has strengthened its human rights machinery with the launch of the Universal Periodic Review. We share the view of the Secretary-General that the Human Rights Council must ensure that nations are held accountable for the implementation of human rights standards. Failure to do so will result in undermining the credibility of the Council. Member States and the relevant bodies of the United Nations should also work together in a sincere manner to ensure the success of the Council and to promote substantive progress in protecting and promoting human rights as a universal value for all.

We are pleased to take note of the report (A/61/583) of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence on the pilot initiative of "delivering as one", which details some important lessons with regard to improvements in delivering programmes with reduced transaction costs.

Strengthening gender equality and women's empowerment is one of the core elements of system-wide coherence. As we have adopted a resolution

requesting the Secretary-General to provide detailed modalities on the composite entity option, we look forward to taking substantive action during this session of the General Assembly.

Given the fact that the 2005 World Summit embraced the concept of the responsibility to protect, my delegation looks forward to the consideration at the United Nations of the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

The Republic of Korea attaches great importance to creating a stronger United Nations through full accountability. In particular, we will make every effort to reach an agreement on the human resource framework and the new system of administration of justice. Among various efforts to increase the accountability of the United Nations, my delegation appreciates the Secretary-General's periodic informal briefings to the General Assembly with regard to his recent activities. Those briefings have led to an interactive engagement with Member States and demonstrate the Secretariat's efforts to enhance its transparency and accountability. We hope that the Secretary-General's accountability compact with senior managers will bring about real change and foster a new working culture in the Secretariat.

Let me conclude by renewing the Republic of Korea's support for the Secretariat in making the United Nations a more effective, more accountable and better functioning Organization under the able leadership of the Secretary-General.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): First of all, I wish to express my deep appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his dedication in leading the wide-ranging activities of the Organization. Japan wholeheartedly supports his determination to make the Secretariat more efficient and dynamic.

The most pressing challenge facing the United Nations is, above all, to save the bottom billion people from poverty and destitution and to enable them to lead safe and dignified lives. All the means available to the United Nations should be mobilized to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The high-level midterm review of 25 September provided an ideal opportunity for world leaders to recommit to acting together to put the achievement of the MDGs back on track. We welcome the positive outcome of the review.

Japan sought to place the MDGs at the top of the agenda at two important summits that it hosted earlier this year. The Group of Eight (G8) summit at Hokkaido focused on actions for health, water and sanitation, and education. The fourth Tokyo International Conference on African Development emphasized the need to accelerate broad-based economic growth with a view to achieving a vibrant Africa. The Conference also produced a concrete action plan for the next five years. Japan is determined to follow through with the effective implementation of those commitments.

The steep rise in global food and commodities prices adversely affects the efforts to achieve the MDGs. Food security is a multifaceted and structural challenge that requires a fully coordinated response from the international community. We welcome the strong personal initiative of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to mobilize the entire United Nations system to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for short- and medium-term food security. The Comprehensive Framework for Action will serve as a good basis for the implementation of plans for countries in need. For too long in many countries, agriculture and food production have not been given the priority in development policy that they deserve. We should turn the crisis into an opportunity to better recognize the importance of investing more in agriculture and food production in order to increase food self-sufficiency.

The pursuit of reducing poverty alone will not lead us to achieve the MDGs because large segments of the billion poorest people at the bottom are trapped in conflict or struggling for survival in fragile post-conflict situations. The recent record indicates that about half of the countries in post-conflict situations have experienced a relapse of conflict within 10 years. The end of conflict should be accompanied by immediate actions to strengthen social and economic stability. The vicious cycle of armed conflict and poverty is a major challenge for today's world. In order to break that cycle, it is essential to tackle poverty and conflict together in an integrated manner. The Peacebuilding Commission is the key organ to fill some of those gaps. It deserves the full support of Member States.

Conflict resolution, peacekeeping and peacebuilding are core activities of the United Nations. With its universal and impartial characteristics, there is no more effective or more legitimate Organization than the United Nations to

take the lead in those vital activities. Japan will spare no effort to strengthen peace operations in support of the Secretary-General.

When we think about peace, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation should garner no less attention. As the only country to have suffered nuclear devastation, we are determined to stop proliferation and to work towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. Japan will submit another draft resolution at this session of the General Assembly to lay out concrete measures towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Climate change is another major challenge to humankind, in our generation and beyond. Its impacts affect our day-to-day livelihoods and economies and are directly related to sustainable development. This summer, G8 leaders agreed a global long-term target to reduce emissions and to seek to create an effective global framework under the United Nations in which all major economies participate in a responsible way. We must mobilize our wisdom towards an effective post-2013 international climate regime. Japan is determined to play a leading role in such efforts. We welcome support for the Cool Earth 50 initiative, which is an effort of developing countries to mitigate and adapt, fully utilizing environmental technology and financial resources.

This year, the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will be celebrated all over the world, including in Japan. Human rights are the birthright of the peoples of every nation. No Government may shirk its responsibility to protect and promote them. We support the efforts of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to strengthen the role of his Office in providing assistance to countries in need.

The protection and promotion of human rights should be vigorously pursued with the nexus of peace, human rights and development in mind. Human security entails a human-centred and integrated approach, which is essential in tackling freedom from fear and want while putting the livelihoods and dignity of individuals and communities at the centre of our focus. We are pleased with the broad support for such an approach among Member States, as manifested in the fourth meeting of Friends of Human Security and the thematic debate of the General Assembly last May. Japan will work together with other interested countries to ensure that the human security perspective is better reflected in the broad areas of activity of the United Nations. As I have mentioned, those include the MDGs, food security, peacebuilding, climate change and the protection of human rights.

We need to enhance the capacity of the United Nations to work more coherently and effectively for individuals in need on the ground. The ongoing efforts to reform the United Nations must be accelerated to restructure it to meet the realities and requirements of the contemporary world.

First, the system-wide coherence of the normative and operational activities of the United Nations should be pursued through a bottom-up approach, while continuously focusing on the protection and empowerment of the individual and communities. For instance, Japan believes that coordination and partnership with the United Nations system to achieve gender equality and empower women are critical. With a view to filling the gaps that have been revealed with regard to support on the ground, we should continue to discuss how the United Nations might best carry out its operations in a more coherent and effective manner.

Secondly, Japan attaches great importance to the transparent, effective and efficient management of the United Nations. We fully support the Secretary-General's management reform efforts. No doubt, human resources are the most precious resources of the United Nations. Contractual arrangements and conditions of service have to be considered in conjunction with key policy issues, such as mobility and rotation, geographical distribution, career development, performance evaluation and accountability. Those measures should help hold the Secretariat accountable and responsible to Member States. Sound and prudent financial management is also essential to ensure the strong and continued commitment of Member States to United Nations activities. To that end, Japan stands ready to contribute to developing consensus on the budget of the United Nations.

Lastly, the reform of the United Nations will not be complete without meaningful Security Council reform. Japan welcomes the unanimous decision of the General Assembly on the last day of the sixty-second session to commence intergovernmental negotiations in informal plenary meetings of the General Assembly no later than at the end of next February. Japan continues

to believe that the Security Council needs to be reformed by expanding both the permanent and non-permanent categories of membership in order to reflect the realities of the twenty-first century. We will act constructively and participate in the forthcoming intergovernmental negotiations to achieve the earliest possible reform.

Let me conclude my remarks by renewing Japan's firm commitment to creating a more effective and better functioning United Nations.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his report (A/63/1) on the work of the Organization. The report has reviewed the progress made by the United Nations in various fields over the past year and has described current and future tasks and challenges facing the Organization. I wish to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his diligent work and outstanding performance in the past year.

Today, our world is undergoing profound and complex changes that present us with unprecedented challenges and opportunities. In the face of continuously emerging global threats and challenges, it has become the widely shared consensus of the international community that we should engage in multilateral cooperation using the United Nations as the platform to jointly respond to challenges and promote peace and development for humankind.

Halfway to the deadline for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), we note that achieving them on time by 2015 will be a daunting task. African countries face especially huge challenges in that regard. China calls on developed countries to honour their commitment to allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product to official development assistance in order to help developing countries, African countries in particular, to respond to development challenges. In June of this year, the Millennium Development Goals Africa Steering Group made its proposals for the achievement of the Goals in Africa. We hope that countries will strengthen cooperation with the United Nations and work jointly to put those proposals into practice.

Climate change has become a real challenge that requires a joint response within the framework of international cooperation. Negotiations on the implementation of the Bali Road Map are at a critical juncture at this moment. We hope that the Conference of States Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Poznan this December, will achieve positive results and lay the foundation for an agreement at Copenhagen in 2009.

The humanitarian issue involves the survival of the so-called bottom billion and is closely related to the peace, stability and development of the world. We support a central coordinating role for the United Nations in international humanitarian cooperation on the basis of respect for the wishes of the recipient countries, their autonomy and their right to participate.

The United Nations plays an important role in conflict prevention, peacekeeping and post-conflict peacebuilding. We welcome reasonable reform of the Department of Political Affairs so as to enhance its mediation and good offices capacity and bring into play the unique advantages of the United Nations in the area of conflict prevention. We support the United Nations in strengthening the planning and management of peacekeeping operations, optimizing resource allocations and improving the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations.

The Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which was adopted in 2006, marked a milestone in our efforts to strengthen international counter-terrorism cooperation. We must build on the achievements of the past two years and continue to work towards comprehensive and balanced implementation by the United Nations system of the four pillars of the Strategy.

The situation in the Middle East continues to be the biggest test for the United Nations. The only feasible way to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Middle East question is to carry out political negotiations on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and the principle of land for peace, in order to settle disputes and achieve peaceful coexistence between Israel and all Arab States, including an independent Palestinian State. We sincerely hope that the leaders of Israel and Palestine will maintain the momentum in the dialogue. We support a greater role for the United Nations on the Middle East question.

The crisis in Darfur, the Sudan, tests the unity of the international community. The involvement of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the issue of the Sudan has further complicated the crisis in Darfur and Sudan. Both the League of Arab States and the African

Union (AU) have expressed concern over the indictment of the leader of the Sudan by the ICC. We believe that the parties concerned should respect and heed the views of Arab and African countries.

China appreciates and welcomes the fact that the parties concerned in Zimbabwe have settled their election-related disputes through dialogue and negotiations and have reached an agreement on the establishment of a Government of national unity. The Southern African Development Community and the AU, working with former President Mbeki of South Africa as the mediator, have played a leading and constructive role in promoting a political settlement of the question of Zimbabwe. China commends and supports such a role. Facts have once again proven that, as an effective means for the peaceful settlement of disputes, mediation is playing an increasingly important role in today's world.

There are currently both opportunities and challenges in the area of international strategic security. The United Nations should continue to take the lead by revitalizing the multilateral arms control and disarmament agenda. Countries should work together to further strengthen the international non-proliferation regime, especially to safeguard the authority, effectiveness and universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We oppose any form of proliferation of nuclear weapons. Countries must fulfil their international non-proliferation obligations and, on that basis, their right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy should be respected and safeguarded.

The reform of the United Nations has achieved many positive results since 2005. In the next phase, reform should focus more on the question of development in order to bring benefits to developing countries.

China supports the reform of the Security Council. We believe that priority should be given to increasing the representation of developing countries, and in particular African countries. China supports that the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council Reform continue to play an important role. We hope a general agreement will be reached among Member States on relevant questions.

We approve, in general, of the work done by the Human Rights Council since it was established. We support the Council in carrying out its work in a fair, objective and non-selective manner and on the basis of mutual respect, so as to promote constructive international dialogue and cooperation in the area of human rights.

We support the reform of the Secretariat with a view to improving efficiency, saving resources and strengthening accountability.

Multilateralism and multilateral cooperation using the platform of the United Nations represent the only way to maintain and promote world peace and development. We are willing to work together with other countries to build a strong United Nations and a harmonious world of lasting peace and common prosperity.

Mr. Voto-Bernales (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): In the current circumstances, it makes more sense than ever for us to ask ourselves once again how globalization is affecting our countries. Generally speaking, we believe that a look at today's global society reveals that economic growth has served to involve more countries in trade, investment and migration. It has brought us closer together through communication technologies, which have increased efficiency, transformed economies and placed a vast universe of information at the reach of millions of people. Democratic and human rights are also now more widespread.

There are disquieting signs of fragmentation, however, as the reality of poverty and social inequality has become more apparent. In some regions, there has been an increase in conflicts spilling over borders. Along with the criminality they entail, global threats such as terrorism and drug trafficking have grown. Warnings have increased in connection with the degradation of the environment and global warming. Such crises as the food and energy crises have produced the danger of instability in States, as well as risks to international governance and security. All of that points to a changing and complex international situation that underscores the concept of interdependence and calls for shared and proportional responsibilities and efforts on the part of States to address those important issues on a multilateral level within the United Nations system and regional organizations. Given that situation, Peru would like to reiterate its belief that renewed and strengthened multilateralism is the most effective tool for ensuring global governance based on the rule of law and respect

for human rights and the values of international peace and justice.

As pointed out by the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/1), the task before us today is to continue the reform process in a determined and responsible manner so as to strengthen the United Nations in order to make it more efficient in reaching the poorest and most vulnerable and to better coordinate the use of global goods of humankind. The immediate goal is to remain committed to stabilizing the international political situation and to establish a strong international alliance to achieve development and social justice. Member States should continue their multilateral efforts to reform the United Nations while maintaining a spirit of compromise and realistic expectations. We must act with determination while being aware of the fact that efforts should be aimed at producing substantial mandates and results in a reasonable time frame that serve to strengthen the effectiveness and credibility of both multilateralism and the United Nations.

The reform processes of the Organization — including those relating to the Security Council, system-wide coherence and the Secretariat — continue to call for a sensitive and sustained negotiations process. The process of implementing the agreements reached in the Outcome Document of the 2005 Summit demands that we employ more imagination and a heightened spirit of compromise.

Peru is currently facing the formidable challenge of combating poverty and inequality. Along with promoting economic growth, opening up new markets and encouraging investment and the creation of jobs, we have achieved positive results in implementing comprehensive programmes to provide social assistance and increase inclusion while at the same time decentralizing and improving our productive capacity and expanding access to health and education services.

We believe that the coordinated support of the United Nations and international systems should serve both to catalyse and complement national efforts in the area of development, including efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Peru is confident that it will achieve the Goals before 2015.

As agreed at the Millennium Summit, there is a need to forge a global alliance for development. To that end, we agreed to put in place a more open financial and trading system that is based on predictable and non-discriminatory rules. By sharing in the benefits of globalization and reducing the effects of crises, our countries will be able to ensure that their peoples can partake of the benefits of stability and growth while producing tangible improvements in their living conditions. That will also make it possible for our peoples to feel that they are part of the institutions of society, which will lead to their being full citizens and to the strengthening of the democratic system. It is with that goal in mind that Peru will participate in the preparations for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus.

Peru also believes that migration is an instrument of development in States of origin, in host countries and in the migrant communities themselves. We believe that migration is a matter of shared responsibility. We should re-establish the central role of migration as an engine of opportunities for better well-being and progress, diversity and multicultural and tolerant environments in which there is respect for the rights of migrants.

Climate change poses an enormous challenge to our stability and development as a result of global warming, which is due to greenhouse gas emissions emanating mostly from industrialized countries with production patterns and habits that are unsustainable and cannot be replicated. We must clearly and unequivocally acknowledge that climate change is synonymous with a deterioration of conditions for human life on Earth. It is therefore necessary that we step up our efforts to promote ecologically sustainable development that includes shared but differentiated responsibilities.

Water, agriculture, the production of and trade in foodstuffs, the appropriate use of land and natural resources and access to clean sources of energy are fundamental and multidimensional issues for Peru. We reiterate our belief that there is a need to base our efforts on the Bali Road Map and Action Plan, with a view to reaching a comprehensive agreement to reduce polluting gas emissions next year at Copenhagen.

There has been a rise in the need for humanitarian assistance, with the capacity of the United Nations constantly under strain. As a country vulnerable to such disasters, Peru appreciates the support it has received. We urge that the mechanisms of the Office for the

Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and of the Central Emergency Response Fund continue to be strengthened.

In order that it can be more effective in the maintenance of peace and security, the Organization should continue to enhance its capacity to prevent and resolve conflicts. To that end, it should continue to expand its strategic alliances with various organizations and regional arrangements, as it has done with, among others, the European Union, the African Union, NATO, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Organization of American States and the League of Arab States.

The report before us today reminds us that conflicts continue to command priority attention from the Organization and that they require that we establish and deploy timely and multidimensional peacekeeping operations that include strengthened and comprehensive mandates. Despite the difficulties and obstacles, of which we are all aware, peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance operations constitute tangible and effective tools by which the United Nations can stabilize a situation and protect civilians.

In the process of adapting to new situations, we should be mindful of the growing frequency of conflicts between irregular forces and armies. Such conflicts subject civilians to great vulnerability to violations of their human rights and the protection they should enjoy under international humanitarian law. The United Nations should remain vigilant and punish violations of international humanitarian law, prevent impunity and uphold respect for human rights. The Organization should be prepared to take action under the Charter when a State is not in a position to assume its primary responsibility to protect its people. It is also important to bear in mind that States should also contribute to maintaining their own stability, as well as that of their region, while at the same time respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all other countries.

The report of the Secretary-General also includes information about the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Fund and Office established to support post-conflict efforts. Their work should serve to strengthen coordination at the national and international levels in the area of reconstruction.

The Organization has an important role to play in promoting cooperation to combat terrorism. We have made progress by reviewing the implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy; however, Member States should also continue to make greater efforts to conclude a counter-terrorism convention as soon as possible.

Peru calls for bolstering specialized bodies and mechanisms in order to continue unabatedly to strengthen joint efforts to combat illicit drug trafficking. We believe that such efforts, along with international cooperation based on solidarity, are necessary to respond to the urgency and magnitude of the problem. The new concept of shared responsibility vis-à-vis transnational drug trafficking therefore calls for decisive efforts and strategic alliances based on a balanced political dialogue.

The United Nations should continue to be the forum in which we address the major threats in the areas of disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We must also deal with the problem of small arms and light weapons and continue to strengthen the United Nations to expand cooperation and put in place binding rules.

Lastly, I believe that it is necessary to reiterate that the international system transcends inter-State relations and that it comprises as well non-governmental organizations, local and international corporations, unions and other civil society actors. The United Nations will benefit from remaining open to involving those stakeholders in its work and in devising proposals that include all actors active in the many crucial issues with an impact on development, equity, security and peace throughout the world.

Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of Belarus supports the view of the Secretary-General as to the scale and seriousness of today's international problems and his conclusion that global challenges cannot be resolved by one State or any group of States. We fully share the view that strategies for resolving global problems should be produced at the global level.

In our view, humankind is today trying to cope with a whole complex of individual crises that cannot be dealt with simply by increasing financial resources or perfecting the organizational machinery. Climate change and the energy and food crises are all parts of one multidimensional global challenge. For that

reason, a successful response to those challenges lies with the United Nations, the only universal organization with a general mandate, and it should be coordinated and multidimensional.

In our view, based on the Secretary-General's proposals, the priorities of United Nations work are to meet the needs of the most needy, resolve global problems and strengthen the Organization.

We believe that the United Nations should pay close attention to the particular needs of Africa. Our approach to the problems of that continent is a test of humankind's capacity to ensure its future. After all, Africa determined, determines and will continue to determine the path of our own development. Humankind originated in Africa. In Africa one thousand years of the world's colonial order came to an end. Today, the African continent is facing problems of a global nature, and successfully solving these problems would provide a tremendous impulse to the progress of the whole international community. Failure would place humankind on the path of regression.

We share the Secretary-General's concern that women remain the most vulnerable social group. Violence against women remains widespread and is a serious obstacle to achieving global development goals. Belarus supports the campaign started by the Secretary-General to put an end to violence against women, mobilize public opinion, strengthen political will and make available resources for improving the situation of women.

As the delegation of a country that has recently been fighting human trafficking — the main victims of which are women — we propose that the Secretary-General, in accordance with his noble intentions, support with practical actions the idea of producing a United Nations plan of action to combat human trafficking. In our view, such a plan could become a fundamental step in our fight against the denial of women's rights. The steps necessary within the United Nations to start work on this plan have already been taken.

Belarus supports the appeal for stepping up the efforts of the international community to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, particularly regarding ensuring access to clean drinking water. The Secretary-General notes that approximately one billion people in the world have no such access. We should give serious thought to defining the development of accessible technology for desalination of sea water as a global task over the next few decades. The United Nations could help create a mechanism for using such technology for all mankind, not just those countries which possess it.

We must also give attention to an important omission in the report: it contains no reference to the global energy crisis. We think that sends the wrong signal to the international community. We call on delegations of Member States and the Secretary-General to pay due attention to the formation of a multidimensional United Nations energy agenda. That agenda should take into account the interests of producers, transit countries and consumers. It should promote international cooperation in disseminating technology for economical and effective energy and alternative and renewable energy sources.

In order to resolve the unprecedented serious task we are facing, we need a stronger, more effective and modern Organization. The working methods of the United Nations should be in keeping with the global nature and scope of international problems. In this regard, the delegation of Belarus supports the initiative of the President of the General Assembly to devote the current session to the problem of democratization of the United Nations, and we intend to take an active part in the implementation. In our view, the process of democratization should begin with the United Nations Secretariat.

The Secretariat should provide an example for the Member States by creating an atmosphere of trust, providing assessments of international situations that are free from political bias and, even in difficult circumstances, displaying an independent, professional approach. In this regard, all the Secretary-General's proposals for reforming the Secretariat should be keeping with the following criteria.

Trust between the Secretariat and all Member States should be enhanced, and the Secretariat should be rendered more politically impartial. As a concrete measure that could truly improve the democratic status of the Secretariat, the delegation of Belarus calls for the implementation of our idea of strict observance of the principals of equitable geographical representation in the appointment of the leadership of every department of the Secretariat. We believe that the top five posts in any department should be distributed among the five regional groups.

With regard to the Secretary-General's proposal for a new architecture of accountability in the Secretariat, this should be pursued by the Fifth Committee. Member States should conduct a detailed study and possibly suggest a number of amendments.

In conclusion, we would like to welcome the efforts of Member States and the Secretary-General to modernize and enhance the effectiveness of the General Assembly's work. We believe it is a good idea to strengthen the practice of thematic debates and interactive discussions on the most topical questions. Such a practice would make it possible to enhance the significance of the Assembly in the life of the international community.

We would like to take this opportunity to draw the attention of the Secretariat to the need to pay greater attention to delegation proposals originating in debates. These valuable ideas should not be allowed to languish and should be taken up and put into effect. We also consider the General Assembly's work to revitalize its activities to be an important instrument for increasing the Assembly's effectiveness.

The results of the work of this session are reassuring. We have succeeded in taking inventory of the decisions taken by the General Assembly in the past and now have insight into what the Secretariat and Member States should work on together so that the role of the General Assembly can live up to the lofty mission assigned to it by the Charter.

Mr. Sen (India): The Secretary-General's report (A/63/1) is dignified in language and public-spirited in intention, and we certainly share and support his ideas that we should achieve results, that we should strengthen this Organization, that we should secure the public good and that we should seize the opportunity. These are the phrases he uses. But in fact it seems to us that in seizing the opportunity, we are really missing it.

Churchill described the pessimist as the person who sees a difficulty in every opportunity and an optimist as one who sees an opportunity in every difficulty. Here, we are actually closer to the former than we are to the latter. There is no sense in this report. As a summary of what has been done, it is fine; it is extremely useful and good.

But as a vision for the future, there is no sense at all in this report of the gravity of crisis that the world has entered. There is no sense that we are in the middle or are approaching probably the most profound crisis since the Great Depression. There is no sense of the popular anger at the gap between democratic laws, on the one hand, and bureaucratic reality and the mess that bureaucrats have made of this world, on the other.

In short, in this fundamental sense the report is inadequate, if not irrelevant. David Harvey, a respected academic who heads the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, described the financial system, as early as 2005, as one in which deregulation has meant that it has become a centre for redistribution from the poor to the rich through stockjobbery, debt peonage and fraud. We have seen asset destruction through inflation and asset stripping through mergers and acquisitions; we have seen a level of debt incumbency that has reduced all populations, even in the developed countries, to debt peonage. That, he says, is the nature of the financial system.

This is as exact a reference as my memory allows, and I think it is an accurate description of the financial system. The results are there for all to see. But in the Secretary-General's report there is no sense of the onset of the situation, which was quite apparent even in August, and even earlier. We are entering into this profound crisis, but there is no sense of that at all.

We have a situation in which the world of Wall Street has certainly ended. The world has not ended, but their world has ended. The masters of the universe on Wall Street have bit the dust, and they find that they have the same war at their gate, the same dust in their mouths as the rest of us have. Ultimately, what we have seen is that a free market, like free love, comes to a bad end. In Flaubert's novel *Madame Bovary*, Madame Bovary could have cheerfully continued committing adultery, except that she overspent. So really, it is the credit crunch that brings her affairs to ruin. The Bible says that "those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword", and those who take up investment banking shall perish by investment banking.

Investment banking and the financial market were supposed to achieve total world liquidity and complete risk insurance. In fact, they have shown the Mephistophelian quality of achieving the opposite, namely, the total destruction of world liquidity and the rise of risk to the level of bloodshed and bankruptcy. That is what has really transpired. The effect on the developing world is also going to be profound. Already projects are stopping for lack of equity capital.

The debt crunch is going to become greater and greater because, according to some calculations, mortgage-backed securities amounting to $6 trillion were created by Wall Street. We have seen only the tip of the iceberg. It is really the fear of the unseen part of the iceberg that is causing continued crisis and turbulence. What is more, the sharp decline in exports and the declining commodity prices are going to hurt the developing world.

One can say that the problem affects us both; it affects the poor of both types of countries. That is true. The developing world was, incidentally, asked to actually liberalize capital markets. That was the light we were supposed to follow, the image after which we were supposed to refashion ourselves. It was our great fortune that we did not do so because if we had, the world crisis today would have been a world catastrophe. If you are a developed country you will see a light at the end of the tunnel, but if you are a developing country you know that the light is really the headlight of an approaching train. So we have reached a point where it is no longer a North-South issue at all; it is a problem that affects the poor in both North and South — it cuts across. It is only in this sense, through the realization of the solidarity of suffering, that we can overcome the crisis.

This is, I suppose, what the President of the General Assembly, Father d'Escoto Brockmann, means by brotherhood, where the economic has become the ecumenical. The crisis is profound because it is affecting the real economy in ever-widening circles, like a stone thrown into a pond. Wider and wider concentric circles of crisis are the result. That was actually predicted ages back by John Ruskin, who spoke of "such and such strong hands ... numbed as by nightshade: so many strong men's courage broken, so many productive operations hindered".

It is not the rich, whether in the North or in the South, who are fundamentally bearing the brunt. They have made their money. Phillip Auger, who was an investment banker for 15 or 20 years, has written from the inside in his *The Greed Merchants*, where he says that the young and greedy operatives in the financial sector withdrew $180 billion from the real economy over the last few years, but that wealth was really fairy gold. It vanished with the daylight, and all that gold — again to quote Ruskin — was merely "the gilded index of far-reaching ruin; a wrecker's handful of coin gleaned from the beach to which he has beguiled an argosy".

The problem with this report is that you have no sense of all this and, above all, no sense of what the United Nations can do in terms of its universality, in terms of its convening part, to really begin to rebuild the economic and political governance of the world. Ultimately, what we find is that, through all these crises, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was helpless. It was completely irrelevant. That irrelevance cannot be ended until we address the fundamental issues of the veto, of transparency, of the appointments process and, above all, of quotas. Even the direction the IMF has moved is totally inadequate for the simple reason that, given the depth and scale of the crisis, the creditor-debtor variables are not enough for real reform of the IMF. We are required to embody the democratic principle of "one person, one vote; one nation, one vote", which, at present, is given zero weight in the IMF.

Therefore, unless such a fundamental quota reform takes place, the developing countries cannot be involved in a manner in which their energy and dynamism, which are so crucial, can be used for creating and refashioning the international financial system. It is for the United Nations to carry out a social audit of the Bretton Woods institutions and start giving the parameters for that reform.

Not only is the report completely silent on this, even worse, if you look at the statistical tables in the annex, it actually hides the crisis. It actually foreshadows business as usual, because in the statistical tables it says that there are no figures available for those living under $1 a day.

Today, the more appropriate measure is $1.25 a day, according to the World Bank. We have moved on from $1 a day, and these figures are available. In the same month in which the report was issued, two economists of the World Bank Development Research Group, Martin Ravallion and Shaohue Chen, looked at all the household surveys, the census data, and the national accounts. They looked at international and national pricing data and have concluded that over the last 25 years we have reduced the number of people who live on less than $1.25 a day from 1.9 billion to 1.4 billion. That is a relative, significant decrease, but at the same time the absolute number of people living

on less than $1.25 a day is still formidable: 1.4 billion. Those figures are available.

Similarly, in the statistical tables, the figures regarding the share of gross national product of the lowest quintile of the population are given only for 2005. In other words, there is no possibility for comparison. Figures for earlier years are available. Had the comparison been made, we would have known that the share of the lowest quintile has actually declined sharply over the years. Therefore, the statistical tables really obfuscate and hide; they do not reveal anything or help with anything. The report is statistically irrelevant, in addition to being irrelevant as a whole.

Also important is the fact that, while the report speaks of public goods, public health and climate change, it is completely silent about even a modest issue such as whether we should look at the intellectual property rights (IPR) regime, whether we should set up a commission of experts to look at it because it is completely skewed. After all, knowledge is a public good, but the IPR regime that we have does not ensure a balance between the users of knowledge and the producers of knowledge. Unless we do so, we are not going to have cheaper medicine with which we can tackle the epidemics of the world or affordable mitigation and adaptation technologies with which we can address climate change.

So that is a tremendous lacuna in the report itself. If we look at the IPR regime, it is clear that the United States should be a model for the developing countries. Section 1498 of Title 28 of the United States Code states clearly that the Government can use patents for a public purpose and can even authorize third countries to do so, even without negotiation. That truly is a model for what we should try to achieve.

Similarly, the report is completely silent about what the United Nations could do to stimulate the completely deadlocked Doha Development Round on issues that are necessary, even from a Keynesian point of view, to create the world demand that can get us out of this crisis. Even on those issues, which include cotton, sensitive products and the special safeguards mechanism, no progress at all has been made. In short, here we have an organization — the World Trade Organization — that, like the Bretton Woods institutions, is fast approaching irrelevance and that is completely indifferent to the concerns of the bulk of the membership. If we are going to have subsidies in the developed world and there is a surge of those imported subsidies through imports, then a special safeguards mechanism will surely be required. Or should we continue business as usual, simply protecting commercial interests, and forget about protecting the livelihood concerns of millions of marginal families?

Therefore, on the economic side, I see very little in this report in terms of vision — in terms of really being aware of the crisis that is engulfing us and trying to use the universality of this Organization and its convening power to address it.

The report has much to say about the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and that is welcome. It is a useful summary; the MDGs are important. At the same time, however, there is not a word about how we are going to achieve the MDGs without restructuring international trade and the IPR regime. Perhaps that is why the focus is purely on malaria, mosquito nets and spraying. Obviously, if we are not going to change the IPR regime, we cannot eradicate malaria; we can only go on distributing mosquito nets ad infinitum and go on spraying until we are blue in the face.

So the point is this: unless we really get around to addressing the key issues, including the IPR regime and international trade, and opt for an industrial policy that uses domestic subsidies in the developing world and protective tariffs to shield industry so that we have economic development, we will have no other alternative but to go on distributing mosquito nets. Therefore, we will not be achieving economic development; we will be achieving only welfare colonialism.

Even if we come down to the level of detail, what does the report do? We are even redistributing targets: Target 1.B is shifted from MDG 8 to MDG 1. In other words, we are undermining the legitimacy of the MDG framework; we are undermining the global partnership; we are undermining the measurement of progress. Therefore — and this is very important — we request that the Secretary-General go back to the earlier targets, particularly in the case of Target 1.B. In fact, we should be looking at more effective indicators for measuring and monitoring the achievement of MDG 8.

So those are some thoughts that I wanted to share with members. Before concluding, however, I would like to look very briefly at a few other issues.

The report mentions the responsibility to protect, which is important in terms of human rights, but is completely silent about comprehensive reform of the Security Council. In its present form, the Council has too narrow a political basis to have the impartiality to actually implement any kind of responsibility to protect. Then again, if we look at the statistical tables, we find that the share of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States in official development assistance (ODA) is declining, including in absolute terms. Yet, there is not a word that those States should have access to the Security Council, whose working methods and membership should be radically transformed. There is a problem regarding peace and security — even the report cannot totally hide that — yet there is complete silence about the need to totally reform the Council. In short, the report has nothing whatsoever to say about institutional rebuilding and reform of international political and economic governance, without which we cannot even hope to address this crisis, let alone come out of it.

Then again, let us take a look at some of the other issues. It is good that the report speaks of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, but there is nothing about the need to complete the keystone of that arch: the comprehensive convention on international terrorism. That is necessary, particularly when we consider that we have come so close — in terms of our application of international humanitarian law — to an understanding on article 20, which was formerly article 18.

Similarly, with regard to system-wide coherence, there is nothing at all in the report about the flow of voluntary funding having to be controlled and used by the United Nations and subjected to United Nations budgetary discipline — the discipline of the Fifth Committee. There is some degree of complements on the reform of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, in which the Department was divided in two, creating the Department of Field Support. But the jury is still out regarding how effective that has been. We all know that, in the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), representatives from the field were not able to show that there had been any improvement in efficiency or unity of command. Indeed, more resources have been requested to restore the unity of command following the division. In other words, we divide so that we can ask for more resources in order to unite. That is not reform, but a way to overcome the zero-budget-growth imperative and acquire resources by other means.

We are all in favour of preventive diplomacy; clearly, an ounce of prevention is better than a ton of cure. At the same time, however, we must ask ourselves whether we will not be creating new bureaucratic structures and duplicating capacity.

Finally, on the ACABQ — since I have mentioned the ACABQ — let us turn to the accountability framework. The ACABQ, if I remember correctly, said regarding the accountability framework, internal accountability, enterprise resource management and results-based management that there is no clear statement in the report on those subjects or on how the objectives that have been defined are to be achieved, nor has any consistent benchmark been provided. So, ultimately, we are left with the aphorism that the Member States have to be accountable to the Organization. Either that means that the Organization is its Member States and they are accountable in that sense, in which case the statement, the aphorism, is redundant — it is a tautology — or it means that we have to be accountable to the Secretariat, which is truly topsy-turvy and completely unacceptable.

I will not take up more time. I notice I have spoken for 10 or 15 minutes or more, but before I finish, I would like to conclude by saying that there is the very important issue of disarmament and non-proliferation, where we also would have looked for more details, some greater vision of what we need to do, because that certainly is linked to the fundamental problems of peace and security in the world.

Here again, disarmament is crucial for us particularly, because it is the twentieth anniversary of the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan, which he outlined at the third special session on disarmament and in large part retains its relevance. That is why our Prime Minister in the general debate at the current session called for a nuclear weapons convention that would be universal and non-discriminatory and would prohibit in a time-bound manner the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons.

We look forward to suggestions on how we are going to move in that direction. Therefore, I would suggest that this report should be used simply as a kind of summary of some of the things that have happened, but we in this Hall have to forge for ourselves practical

instruments to address the real crisis in the world by rebuilding the international political economic governance of the world in an institutional sense, which the United Nations alone with its universality and its convening power is able to do.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express our deep appreciation to the Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, for his valuable report on the work of the Organization (A/63/1). The report reflects a clear vision in addressing contemporary international issues, focusing on the imperative of enhancing organized collective action aimed at strengthening the role and credibility of the United Nations in working towards a better future for humanity.

I would also like to express our full concurrence with the clear message of the Secretary-General that we will rise or fall together depending on the effectiveness of our common response and our ability to achieve full accountability as a fundamental organizing principle and operational guideline for our Organization.

However, before commenting further on the report of the Secretary-General, I would like to state that in addition to achieving accountability we need to highlight the importance of strengthening trust between all Member States. That trust constitutes a fundamental pillar for any collective action, especially in the United Nations, but it has been hampered in recent years by the harmful non-implementation of agreed commitments made at previous United Nations summits and conferences, especially in the field of development, and by attempts by some to impose specific patterns and concepts that do not take into account the political, economic, cultural and religious diversity of Member States, as well as the growing trend by some Members to break with collective action in the Organization, moving towards unilateralism based on political or military alliances or driven by economic might.

Hence, the first step in implementing the principle of full accountability should be an explicit commitment by all States to support collective international action. In order for that to be accomplished, we should strive to make that collective action conducive to fulfilling the interests of our peoples in development, peace and security and to the enjoyment of the highest standards of democracy, human rights and basic freedoms, independent of the phenomena of politicization, selectivity and double standards currently witnessed in addressing global issues.

The Secretary-General has allocated more than half of his report and its annexes to the issue of development. It is worth noting that the two high-level meetings convened at the inauguration of the current General Assembly session have undoubtedly led to new common understandings on the increasing development needs that have to be addressed with maximum possible effectiveness, in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to enable Africa to fulfil its developmental needs and goals. That requires a leading role on the part of the United Nations in financing that development, in addition to the important role played by the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, which we look forward to making a success by the end of this year.

There is also a need to create financing mechanisms within the programme budget of the United Nations, which should not be left to rely on voluntary contributions. It is also imperative to strengthen the application of national ownership and to build development efforts on the basis of national strategies without conditionality.

Next year, as the Secretary-General stated, must become a year of action, in order to secure food, housing, education and health for those most in need, in addition to enhancing the strategy led by the Secretary-General to bolster the ability of the African States to achieve the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals. In that connection, we support the proposals of the Secretary-General to promote and revitalize the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and to provide the necessary financial resources to achieve that goal.

Much as we attach importance to development, we equally call for enhancing the capability of the United Nations in the settlement of disputes, its capacities not only in preventive diplomacy but also in peacekeeping missions. While we support strengthening the role of the Department of Political Affairs in those two important fields and that of the Secretary-General in conducting good offices, the United Nations is duty-bound to enhance its role in

achieving the peaceful settlement of all disputes and not to confine its efforts to dispatching peacekeeping missions for dozens of years without exerting a parallel effort to achieve the necessary peaceful settlement.

We welcome the role of the United Nations as embodied in the international Quartet and the United Nations special envoys to the Middle East. However, we believe in the importance of strengthening its role in a more active way, in order to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, especially as the terms of reference for the peace process were created here in the United Nations and will remain the basis governing any final settlement.

Along the same lines, we must strengthen the role of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Peacebuilding Office and Peacebuilding Fund in a framework conducive to greater coordination between the role of the Secretary-General, on the one hand, and the role of the Commission, on the other, especially in view of the leading operational role assumed by the Commission on the ground. In supporting international action to confront the spiralling food crisis, we also welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General to formulate a comprehensive strategy to deal with that crisis, including a quick response to the humanitarian situation created by the crisis. That also requires frank discussion of the activities of the Central Emergency Response Fund, to which developed countries have contributed generously in addressing humanitarian crises, but, unfortunately, refrain from showing the same kind of contribution in implementing internationally agreed commitments within the United Nations, especially in the field of development.

The year 2008 marks the sixtieth anniversary of United Nations activities in the field of peacekeeping. It also coincides with the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the fortieth anniversary of the adoption of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which undoubtedly requires of us a thorough assessment of each of these three important fields.

In the field of peacekeeping, Egypt has supported the proposals of the Secretary-General for restructuring the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the establishment of the Department of Field Support. At the same time, we have to express concern over the continuing expansion in the budget of peacekeeping operations compared to the total budget of the Organization. We also wish to voice our concern that the continuation of peacekeeping operations has not been coupled with serious efforts by the Organization to reach comprehensive peace agreements. In this context, we agree with the Secretary-General's assertion in his report that there is a need for "sustained political engagement with relevant parties so that there is a peace to keep" (*A/63/1, para. 49*).

As Egypt has provided and will continue to provide more of its best men and women to participate in United Nations peacekeeping missions, believing in the significance of the concept of international collective security, it also calls for a higher degree of coordination between the troop-contributing countries (TCCs) and the Security Council, in order to achieve stability in the international presence in the field without delay.

In the field of human rights, we welcome the progress achieved in the work of the Human Rights Council as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly. On this score, we share the view of the Secretary-General that we have achieved extensive international acceptance of human rights standards. Yet we emphasize the necessity of respecting cultural, religious and ethnic diversity in dealing with these issues, and the necessity of refraining from any attempt to impose concepts that have not been agreed upon. We caution against the attempts of some to promote themselves as the guardians of human rights issues at the United Nations. All of us believe in the importance of human rights and in the necessity of securing those rights for all peoples within an internationally agreed framework, and foremost among these rights is the right to development.

Concerning the new issues currently under discussion, Egypt participates in the ongoing consultations regarding paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome document on the responsibility to protect. We stand ready to discuss the implementation of these two paragraphs within the General Assembly, with a view to reaching clear agreement on the scope of these two paragraphs regarding their relation to national sovereignty as well as the roles of the General Assembly and the Security Council in this area.

Moving to the question of disarmament, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is undoubtedly passing through its most serious

crisis at present, especially in view of its failure to achieve universality and its explicit failure to implement all elements of the indefinite extension package agreed upon in 1995, particularly the Middle East resolution. In addition, this situation has also been aggravated by efforts aimed at strengthening the international handling of non-proliferation issues at the expense both of achieving the universality of the NPT of the issues of nuclear disarmament. Unfortunately, all these aspects presage a potential threat to international faith in the NPT and the indefinite extension package.

The passing of 40 years since the adoption of the NPT necessarily sets off a warning bell with respect to international efforts aimed at strengthening implementation of the Treaty, in order to achieve a successful review of the Treaty by 2010, strengthen the NPT regime, achieve nuclear disarmament, and promote the shared belief that the Treaty should be upheld as the cornerstone of international collective security in the nuclear field.

Similarly, the success of the review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy at the beginning of September of this year should be complemented by strenuous efforts to strengthen the participation of Member States in the Strategy's implementation. Implementation should not be confined to the committees formed by the Secretariat on its own initiative.

In conclusion, I wish to applaud the proposals of the Secretary-General in the various fields of reform, including achieving system-wide coherence in the work of the Organization, strengthening accountability in the Secretariat, promoting the administration of justice and making full use of information and communications technology. I should also like to commend the Secretary-General's policy of openness towards the Member States through regular periodic briefings with the General Assembly, fostering cooperation with regional organizations and the participation of civil society and the private sector in the activities of the Organization, based on the fulfilment of the common interests of Member States within the provisions of the Charter.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): The annual report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/63/1) provides a good overview of the accomplishments during the past year and the complicated challenges ahead. The report helps us to keep our focus, and I will touch briefly upon the three key areas the Secretary-General points out in the report.

Delivering results for people most in need is critical for maintaining peace and security, which is a complex, multidimensional task. Poverty and underdevelopment are among the greatest challenges the international community is faced with today.

We are halfway towards the year 2015, the target date for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Although considerable progress has been made, it remains our grave concern that many developing countries have little chance of achieving the goals by 2015. More is needed to be done with regard to financing for development. The forthcoming meeting in Doha on financing for development will test the resolve of the international community.

The protection and promotion of fundamental human rights is one of the primary aims in the area of the maintenance of peace and security. In his report, the Secretary-General notes the significant progress made by the international community in advancing human rights standards and mechanisms.

Women's rights are fundamental human rights and, as such, are important in themselves. Moreover, it has become a well-known fact that gender equality and women's empowerment are also smart economics, without which there could be no poverty eradication and no achievement of the MDGs. Likewise, there is a clear gender dimension when it comes to conflict, peace and security, and women have a distinctive and important role to play in both conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

We strongly support the reinforcement of the work of the United Nations in the field of conflict prevention, which is indeed in line with the holistic approach we have increasingly applied to our work. We say that there is no security without development and no development without security, as has so often been said in this Hall.

Securing global goods is another important key for maintaining peace and security. Climate change is a threat to human security. The most vulnerable, including the small island developing States and the least developed countries, which will be hardest hit, are the least responsible for causing climate change. We

must accept the fact that securing a safe future for mankind is the common responsibility of all nations. The economic costs of doing so must be shared according to means.

In our search for peace and security, all Member States must continue their joint effort in the fight against terrorism. Although much has already been done under the auspices of the United Nations, the persistence of, and even increase in terrorist attacks remains of grave concern. Therefore, more needs to be done, and Iceland supports the conclusion of an international counter-terrorism convention. A strengthened international legal framework would solidify counter-terrorism efforts and help ensure that our fundamental respect for human rights and humanitarian law is not sacrificed in the battle.

The continued proliferation of arms is a constant threat to peace and security and Iceland regrets the limited progress in the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.

The proliferation of nuclear weapons, with their immense destructive power, is especially worrisome, and Iceland fully supports the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency. However, small arms and light weapons also pose a great danger, and no effort should be spared in trying to decrease the death toll claimed by those weapons. An important step in that direction is the curbing of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and Iceland is among those countries that have advocated the conclusion of binding legal instruments on brokering in small arms and light weapons, as well as on marking and tracing. Further, the conclusion of an arms trade treaty would certainly be a significant achievement towards the same end.

We fully agree with the Secretary-General that we have to create a stronger United Nations by working towards full accountability. Although frustration and impatience often characterize views of how the United Nations addresses global challenges, the fact of the matter is that the United Nations system as a whole indisputably plays a central role in preserving peace, staving off hunger and famine, and coordinating the world response to the multitude of crises facing humankind at various times. Let us not forget that the United Nations can do only what its Member States are willing to let it do. It is our responsibility to give the United Nations the necessary means and mandates for it to effectively address current threats and challenges.

The United Nations plays a crucial role in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, and it is important that the Organization be fully equipped, both financially and institutionally, to address those important issues. At the moment, that is unfortunately not the case. It has been recognized that the United Nations work in that field is often underresourced, fragmented and lacking in accountability. In Iceland's view, it is of utmost importance that those shortcomings be addressed during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, with the aim of building a stronger United Nations that is more responsive, coherent and accountable, to the benefit of all.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.